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"SNOWED UP."

I BELIEVE we were all plunged in a profound reverie.

Some were thinking, perchance, of home, or weaving weird hopes, which end in air; some, of the distance to be traversed before supper-time arrived; some, toying with those strange spirit-fancies that stealthily approach, and enfold with impalpable but close embrace, even the most unimaginative of us, at certain moments. I know we all started violently when the driver broke the silence, with an exclamation something between a grunt and an oath. One of the traces had given way.

The carriage stopped. Let us discuss its inmates.

My own position as an occupant of that carriage was a peculiar one. I had only known my present companions since the last few hours, for travelling an "unprotected female," I should perhaps have found some little difficulty in continuing my journey from the hotel where we all had passed the night, had not this party very good-naturedly offered me the fifth seat in their conveyance, one of the gentlemen taking his on the box instead of within, for that purpose. They turned out extremely agreeable people. A father, mother, and daughter, named Fullerton, and a Mr. Driscoll, their friend, travelling for pleasure, and determined to enjoy as much of that commodity as could be crowded into a two months' holiday. So much for my companions, with whom I hope to make my readers better acquainted hereafter; for myself, I must be judged by the same ordeal. To proceed.

For nearly five hours we had been gradually ascending from the little inn, our last resting-place, enclosed in meadows carpeted with velvet turf, to the present wild and mountainous district, looking up towards that wide fissure cleaving the Alpine ridge through which lay our distant road. After leaving the cultivated ground, we had found ourselves buried beneath the midnight of pine and larch forests, which covered the mountain-sides. We were now entering the region of glaciers, and noticed with wonder the strange effect produced by flowers of every imaginable hue, —for it was the end of the brief Alpine summer,—growing almost within the grasp of the snowy monarch of the surrounding rocks, like a gaunt and veteran warrior, looking down upon the forms of tender infants, protected from the tempests by his mighty shade!

Proceeding on a zig-zag terrace, or tourniquet, with the fall beneath us many hundred feet, the road, by means of which we had reached the present elevation, appeared like a

slender serpent unrolling its innumerable convolutions.

"That's right, Driscoll," exclaimed Mr. Fullerton to his friend, who had jumped from his seat in front and seized the horses' heads. "Well, my man," addressing the driver in French, "what d'ye look so black for?"

"Surely there cannot be much the matter?" said Mrs. Fullerton, while her husband awaited Jehu's reply, yet, as she spoke, she scanned the harness somewhat anxiously.

"No, there is no fear. Yet —" and again Mr. Fullerton repeated his enquiry.

"*Mais, Monsieur!*"

"What a good thing the fellow understands French: he's a German, body and soul," whispered the husband in his wife's ear, "but they say well, French carries you all over the world."

"You forget, papa, Mr. Driscoll speaks excellent German," put in Miss Fullerton quickly, whether out of zeal for the language or the linguist we leave undecided. The re-

mark, however, stopped her father's self-glorification at the success of his somewhat untidy French, and set him again enquiring into the nature of the accident.

"*Peste!*"

This exclamation was addressed by our conductor to one of his horses, whose fidgettiness had undone all the man's dexterous combinations of cutting and contriving. What nation is patient under such circumstances?

"There, now, he has lost his temper, and we shall do nothing. You ladies had better get out, and make the best of a bad bargain. I see, madam," turning to me, "you are making up your mind for a scene from Mrs. Radcliffe, but unfortunately it is high noon, and brigands are not to be had at any price."

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Fullerton, "don't awake such frightful reminiscences."

"I only wish, dear mamma, there were any chance of such an agreeable adventure," laughed the lively girl at her side. "Imagine a gallant knight of the road making love

with pistols;" but what further would have passed on her part, or by way of disclaimer from her parents, was stopped by the appearance of Mr. Driscoll at the carriage window.

"You are not frightened I hope?"

The enquiry was to us all generally, but I observed he looked at the younger lady for a reply to the question. She blushed, too, as she rejoined:

"Oh, no; enjoying it! Do you think there is any hope of our having to pass the night in this romantic spot?"

"The man has mended the trace with a piece of cord; it may last some time, but he will not insure safety if we require him to proceed."

What was to be done? A council was immediately called. There appeared nothing for it but to retrace our steps towards a solitary house about half a mile below; and the strangely castellated appearance of which, had struck us all with a feeling of interest as we passed it. We could still perceive the sum-

mit of this building among the trees which thickly surrounded this lonely and neglected retreat.

The man shook his head. "We should get nothing there," he said; "none but goblins inhabited it! but there was a little convent a short distance off the main road; he thought he could reach that, if we were careful and went slowly," and thither we accordingly agreed to repair.

While he yet spoke, indeed, the sky became dark and threatening, and glad enough we were all to make the best of our way to the promised shelter.

Half an hour brought us in sight of it. It was a picturesque little building, perched upon the side of the mountain, with crags all around and a miniature torrent foaming itself away in misty wreaths below. A lay-sister received us; some anniversary was being celebrated in the little chapel, and all the nuns were there. We saw them kneeling as we passed a half-closed window, and found they

would be engaged at intervals until midnight. But nothing in the way of good-will and welcome, was omitted by our kind guide, and shortly we were seated near a hospitable fire, by means of which she was preparing us a meal so good as to put even our growling "John Bulls" into excellent humour.

The repast ended, and while the gentlemen smoked their cigars, we ladies amused ourselves by inspecting all the curiosities the place afforded. One apartment in particular excited our interest; it was supported on four pillars, and though on the ground floor, not beneath it, looked strangely dim and dungeon-like. It was unused now, we were informed, but had been furnished with a grating which rose from end to end, through which the Nuns were occasionally permitted to see their relations.

The sister pointed out a stone in the flooring also, and told us there was a story about it.

"Would she tell it us?"

"Oh! yes, with pleasure; it had something to do with that house, too, about which we had enquired—the house by itself, among the fir trees yonder."

"What! the haunted house?"

Our agreeable nun smiled.

"Yes, that was the place. She knew some folks said it was haunted; but she never believed it for her part."

We were all curiosity; the sister all desire to gratify it. She had seen better days, and was even tolerably educated, and the substance of her story about the building, which had excited so much solicitude in ourselves and so much fear in our postilion, was as follows.

THE OLD HEIM-HAUS.

The building in question had now been uninhabited for many years. Several of the apartments were no longer free from the inroads of the weather; the ivy and lichen trailed in bands of dark foliage over the casements, and covered the broken stone balustrades with shadowy wreaths. A disagreeable notoriety—how or whence acquired, no one knew—was attached to the place. Some said lights were to be seen at night flitting through the deserted chambers; others pretended to have heard shrieks of laughter and sighs of

pain, mingling with the moaning of the wind on winter nights; but then there were bats and owls among the pines surrounding it, and meteors were not unfrequently to be observed in old, damp places like that, even within, as well as outside their precincts.

No one expected the place would ever own another master, and the agent of the proprietors had long ceased to make inquiries even, relative to its occupancy or condition.

All at once it was noised abroad that a family had come to live at the Heim-Haus. They made their appearance at mass the following Sunday. A father and mother, two daughters of nearly the same age, and a stout Swiss serving-maid, completed the establishment, which was conducted upon the most economical principles. It was surmised that they came there to retrench; indeed, no other motive could have led them to so desolate a spot. It was a shame to immure two such young girls in this dismal place; but they looked always contented enough, particularly

the youngest, who was as lively a little maiden as ever carolled Tyrolienne upon the mountains; and whether she milked the kine or wreathed garlands in the old neglected garden, always seemed as if her very life depended upon her employment, and she must, perforce, throw her whole merry little soul into its performance.

Alice, the elder, was a totally different girl to her sister. She was fond of solitude, liked to watch the stars moving, like a bevy of white-robed Nuns through the heavens; would sit and chant strange melodies to herself in the dark; and if the servants brought lights in suddenly, would look as wild, with her large, dark eyes, as if she had just come from spirit-land, and could see a little salamander sitting coiled up in the middle of every lamp-flame, or hear magical music in the diapason of her father's endearing epithets and inquiries.

She was the apple of that old man's eye, the joy and pride of his heart, perhaps because

she had been an ailing infant, and was now a very delicate woman; perhaps because she had an intellect of a strangely rare and beautiful description, and would, nestling in his bosom, oftentimes whisper to him her fancies, when she disdained speaking of them to others.

The family had been about a twelvemonth at the old Heim-Haus, when news of several depredations committed by a band infesting the mountainous district, reached its inhabitants and the neighbourhood. The Frau got frightened, and forbade her daughters to saunter after sunset; the maid fetched the work from the convent that the young ladies executed, week by week, for the sake of the humble pay, and their faces were seldom seen except on Sundays by those who used to look with joy for their appearance.

Whether it was the confinement nobody could guess, but Alice was observed to become suddenly very pale, and often rambled away into some remote corner of the house or garden, where she lay concealed for hours,

refusing to answer the voices raised to recall her, and appearing when she rejoined the family to know nothing of the search that had been instituted for her by her parents and sister.

One evening—it was in the autumn, and there had been a sunset such as one seldom sees even here—the little household was grouped together outside on the terrace overlooking the valley. The old man sat with his wife's hand in his, talking of old times in far-off England, where it seems they had spent, as *émigrés*, many years of their troubled lives. Carlen, tired with a scamper after her truant goat over the garden, had seated herself at their feet, listening intently to their conversation, and Alice leaned upon the back of the rustic seat, looking with abstracted gaze at the golden clouds, as they, one by one, disappeared below the horizon.

The father went on speaking gently, and every now and then his wife chimed in with a remembrance or a quiet regret for some dear

friend long since separated from them, and gone far away in the boat, which pushes off ever and anon with some fresh traveller to the land we shall all of us reach in time! So the shadows came on, Carlen still listening, when, suddenly looking up, she perceived Alice moving silently away, and apparently returning to the house. Carlen stealthily arose and followed her. She was *de trop*—her parents were talking of their marriage.

Alice went on till she reached the house. Once she looked back, but Carlen was behind a bush, and the former did not see her. She entered the door, and when Carlen arrived in the large marble-paved hall, she saw the fluttering white robe of her sister disappearing upon the staircase.

"Alice!" she called; "Alice dear!"

She was unheard, and anxious to catch the fugitive, she sprang like a young fawn up the flight of steps, and arrived in the large chamber into which Alice had turned, just in time to observe a door close noiselessly, a

door she had never noticed, in the further corner, near to one of the casements.

Carlen was now a little frightened. She scarcely liked to proceed, but something impelled her to follow reluctantly, and endeavour to find the means by which the wall had unclosed to give her sister exit.

She was several minutes in finding the spring, but at length discovering it, the opening door revealed a small circular staircase in the thickness of the wall, and this Carlen rapidly ascended, leaving the portal open behind her.

A winding flight of steps, so steep that scaling them took away her breath, introduced the young girl to a chamber, the door of which was ajar, low, and arched, and strongly bound with iron. It was so dark that for a second or two she remained unable to discern anything clearly, and when she did again recover the use of her vision, she could scarcely believe its evidence, so unexpected was the scene presented before her.

The room had the appearance of a small oratory; there was a niche, as if formerly occupied by an image, on one side, and on the other a casement, carefully masked from below, it would appear, and commanding only a view of the heavens, wherein a dim radiance gave promise of a speedy advent of the moon. But the furniture of this extraordinary apartment puzzled Carlen still more even than its discovery. When her eye grew accustomed to the dimness, she observed chairs of strange and antique workmanship, of a fashion, indeed, wholly extinct. A little circular table, of rough and dingy wood, was covered with queer-looking old books and parchments, and several extraordinary instruments were scattered among them.

At first Carlen did not think her sister was there, but a low sigh and a whispered exclamation convinced her she was near. As Carlen looked, the slight form of Alice arose from the ground in the shadow of the window, and her face was lighted up with

the whole power of the remaining light, looking as the young sister had never seen it look before.

Could this, indeed, be Alice? So far from the timid, bashful girl, sorrowful and abstracted, she now appeared radiant with happiness and life, her eyes beamed, her lip was smiling, and the colour came and went with sparkling brilliancy in her usually pale cheeks. Was it her sister, or a phantom? Carlen was a bold girl with a safe conscience; she determined to ascertain the truth.

"Alice!"

"Carlen!" — It was herself. — "Good heavens! How came you here?"

Alice spoke so sternly, that her young sister trembled, hesitated, and burst into tears.

"Alice! Alice! do not be angry; I followed you. This, then, is where you sit away from me who love you so?" And as she thought that her sister had kept this secret so long from her, her grief was redoubled.

"Hush, child," was the answer; and as

Alice spoke she drew the other towards her, and seated her affectionately at her side upon a low bench within the casement. "Hush! it is useless concealing it from you now; you must know all.—Listen!

"I discovered this place by accident. It suited my habits of reflection and study. I came here constantly day after day, and in this chamber spent the happiest hours of each. I could not have told you my secret, it would have destroyed the whole charm. I loved this retreat because it was mine, and mine only."

"And these books—these instruments?"

"They were here from the first. I examined them all. I never rested till I found out hidden purposes, meanings that would never have suggested themselves to any but one who was to be initiated into the mysteries of knowledge, the arcana of nature's grandest treasury. Gradually I became acquainted with the uses of most of these implements. My education in various languages helped me

to the meanings of the instructions given. The personage who first gathered them together, still watches over the fate of his treasured books; he has tasted of the elixir of life, and is ever young. I shall taste it too some day."

"Alice!"

Carlen had observed with horror as her sister made this extraordinary recital, that her eyes dilated and her cheek glowed with a feverish hectic. Girl as she was, she thought she discovered the symptoms of mental aberration in her wild words and gestures. "Oh, Heaven! what will our parents do? This dreadful calamity, how will they bear it?" was on her lips.

Suddenly she felt her sister's burning lips press her cheek.

"My Carlen! my only, my darling sister! I have said I would tell you all, and I will. When can there be a more fitting time? Now, when the moon, millions of miles above us, yet inhabited by those who see my every ges-

ture; who watch me press thee thus to my heart, Carlen, and know the words I shall speak before my laggard lips shall utter them —when that moon is shining down on us, as she will soon, for see how slowly but gloriously she advances from the shadow of the forest upwards on her silvery path!"

The speaker gazed abstractedly from the window, and poor Carlen, thinking it wiser to fall into her mood stood trembling at her side, waiting until she should resume the strange relation.

Presently she spoke again.

"Sister, I am wiser than many of the seers of the old world. I can cast horoscopes, and compel the starry influences to my will. I have wished to see the true spirit that belongs to mine, and have commanded the elements to bring him before me. I have fasted, as the creature that dares to interrogate destiny should fast. I have wept and I have prayed; and the storm that shook this ruined place to its foundation, and terrified my little Carlen

to tears, brought my spirit lover to my side. In lightning, in tempest, ushered by the lurid glare, by trumpet tongues from fell and river deep, there he stood at that casement; he gazed upon me—gazed— !"

"Oh, Alice! stop—stop!" cried the poor child, who clung to her in an agony of fear. "I implore you not to say such horrible words. Alice, I tremble—I shudder—the moon casts such a strange paleness upon your cheek. Oh, sister, sister! I dare scarcely ask it,—are you like me? are you human? are you, alas!—alas!—alive?"

No wonder the terrified Carlen was bewildered. There was something unearthly in the countenance of the mysterious girl she addressed. Alice observed the effect her looks had produced, tried to smooth her features, and tenderly smiled upon her companion.

"Silly child!" she uttered, fondling her as a mother would, "calm thyself. There is nothing to affright thee. Alive! yes I am

alive, indeed, and would be, not for poor dull years, my Carlen, but for circles of brilliant ages, each more happy, more radiant than the last. You, too, shall be immortal—that is, you may, for the path is difficult, the journey long, but now—"

She hesitated.

Carlen looked up, the accustomed tone of her sister had reassured her.

"Tell me what you mean—explain," she murmured sadly. "Who is this personage—I shudder as I speak,—who seems to share your solitude? If he is a spirit, how can he stoop to love you, a humble girl?"

A proud, calm smile, passed over Alice's face, and then she said simply: "He is as I am, Carlen; but hundreds of years will not take a gleam from his eye, or a flush from his cheek. Shall I tell you how I first suspected his vicinity?"

"Yes, dearest."

"One evening I had been sitting poring over my books for hours. I think I must

have grown faint and exhausted. Suddenly I heard a noise. I had heard it before, but never so distinctly. It was as the clash of fine chain armour following the motion of the wearer. I was frightened; for often I had fancied something moving around me, not perceptible—nay, shudder not, there is nothing to harm us—but still there. I heard the sound, I say, and my heart failed me. Coward as I was, I waited only to see the glance of a breast plate reflected upon the wall there—I never saw the wearer—when I used the last remains of my strength to fly precipitately, and reaching the bottom of the staircase that leads to the hall, fell there insensible. It was the day my father found me, and thought the weight of the heavy baskets of linen, you had carried home—not I—had exhausted me. You never told; why were you silent?"

"I did not hear it had been attributed to that, Alice."

"Did you not? Well, no matter. I am coming to the oddest part of my story. You

won't believe me; never mind, it is still most true. I had no courage to return to my study until the next morning. At last, with trembling steps, I sought the turret, hoping, yet dreading to meet him. I knew he would come—my books had told me so.

"When I entered at last, the room was vacant; but on the table, in this very vase which I had put for flowers, there was a bouquet—such a bouquet! Carlen, the stalks confined together by a ring—a jewel of emeralds. Look—if you are doubtful, here it is!" She displayed her finger, and Carlen uttered a cry of terror, the ring was indeed there, and seemed to throw from the emeralds, gleams of malignant fire.

"I cannot doubt you, Alice."

"That's right, dear. After this I saw him. Ah, I cannot describe him to you now. We have told each other all—he loves me with a love, ah! Carlen, the love of mortals fades into nothingness when it compares with his.

So good, so wise, so courageous, so noble—and to stoop to me!"

As she spoke, she grew entranced in her own imaginings. Advancing a step forward she looked up, and the moon found reflection in her eyes. Carlen timidly followed her.

"Yes," she murmured; "I shall be noble—my birth shall be ascertained—he is descended from kings and potentates—he bears an illustrious name. And my fortune; ah! the letter will come some day—the messenger will bring it with fleet steps up the mountain side, and I shall have fortune at my disposal. Yes, fortune! I would be wealthy for his sake; I would possess all that this world can give. I would be his equal in knowledge, a fitting mate for one who is only partly of this human frame. And I—I am half a spirit, too."

"You are thinking of my grandfather's death, Alice?"

"Yes, child! the money must be ours

eventually; the old man can't live for ever. Even now," she spoke with unnatural emphasis—"the days are running out. I can see—I know—the messenger may be on his road."

These were the last words of any importance that Alice now spoke. She and Carlen looked forth at the moon, silently, tearfully. Clouds passed over the luminary, a wrack of heavy shadows crossed the sky, and at last a few drops of rain beat into the room upon the two young faces, laid so tenderly together.

"Do you love me?" at length said Carlen, and she accompanied the inquiry with a timid caress.

"Dearly, my sweet one," returned the sister.

A short pause ensued. "Try and forget these fancies, Alice," said the younger girl, with a feeling, for the moment, of protection to one she considered no longer competent to

rule her own actions. "Come down, darling, our parents will await us."

Alice made no opposition. She had entirely recovered her usual manner. "I shall not see him to night," she murmured, "the moon is no longer visible. Yes, Carlen, we will go down."

Linked in a close embrace, the sisters descended. Their parents were just seating themselves to the evening meal.

"I will tell all to my father to-morrow," said to herself, the poor bewildered Carlen, who found it impossible to doubt the evidence of her own senses in the ring shown her by Alice, but yet was perfectly convinced of her sister's insanity: "Yes, I will tell them to-morrow; they shall at least sleep one more night in peace, before the dreadful truth bursts upon them."

They did rest another night, calmly and peacefully, but Carlen lay nearly the whole of it weeping melancholy tears. Alice slept

in the room beside hers. Several times in the night she thought of going to bear her company, but she dreaded that the conversation should again turn upon her sister's lamentable monomania. Towards morning she got a little rest. Twice she awoke, persuaded her sister had bent over and kissed her. Twice she again fell into perturbed slumber. When she arose, the morning sun was high in the heavens. She dressed herself quickly. Her mother came to seek her, surprised at her delay: her sister also had not appeared. They entered together the adjoining room.

"Lazy child," said the mother, tenderly, as she drew aside the curtains.

The bed had not been occupied. Could it be? Alas! yes; Alice was nowhere to be found. Alice was gone!

o o o o

"Another strange circumstance," went on the nun, after our exclamations had subsided, "another strange occurrence took place on

the very night of Alice's disappearance. You have gathered that the little family looked for a letter of some importance, and that a relative was expected shortly to die. The post this very night conveyed the intelligence that this long-anticipated event had taken place, but that the letter arrived in a very roundabout manner.

"The man was met by the banditti in the mountains. There was no moon, and he only guessed the number of his assailants to be but two. They did not hurt him, for he wisely abstained from resistance; but they took his bag from him, and must have opened this English letter, as a large enclosure of money it contained was gone, and a peasant picked up the paper itself and took it to those for whom it was intended.

"Alice and Carlen were great heiresses, there was a title, and money to support it. They had spent many an hour in privation and poverty. Now here was the reward. What cared they for wealth? Alice was no

longer there to share it, she for whom they had all hoped, and prayed, and struggled, was lost!

"My story draws to an end. No light was thrown, after every research had been made, upon the manner of the unfortunate girl's disappearance. Only one clue could ever be obtained, and that was from the fact that her mantle had been seen floating down below towards the lake, into which the torrent here empties itself.

"The father grew rapidly more old and decrepid: the mother died. For the sake of his daughter, the old man, after a brief interval, went to England to claim the heritage, which had descended to him from a father implacable and unforgiving in life, but relenting in death. Carlen's beautiful silvery voice was hushed, her smiles had departed, her heart was desolate. The man who drove them from the mountains, on their way to England, said she gazed with straining eyes back to the old Heim-Haus, until the woods shut it from

her sight. Poor old desolate place! it was never let again.

"Scarcely six months from the date of the letter's arrival, a nun sitting alone in this very chamber, which overlooks the torrent, heard sounds, which, though lost at intervals, seemed to her clearly those of a person in distress. She became convinced that a voice was calling, doubtless praying for admittance, for it was a bitter night, and the rain fell fast. The nun, though not tender-hearted, feared to resist the suppliant, and at last walked sulkily to the door. It opened and admitted a lady dressed in a rich robe of velvet, her hair streaming over her shoulders; but she was fatigued, and her mantle and head-dress were damp with the rain. She sank almost fainting into a seat, and requested to see the Superior. It was the poor lost Alice.

"They went to fetch the person she had asked for. But unfortunately, since the period of the calamitous night at the old house, our convent had been appointed to receive

another Superior, the former one having been promoted. This woman must have possessed a hard and forbidding manner. She enlarged bitterly, for she had heard the story, upon the heinous ingratitude of which the poor wanderer before her, had been guilty, and told her, without any preparation, of the death of her mother, and the departure of her other parent to England. The pale face of Alice grew paler; she had already been up to the old house to seek them, and was overwhelmed with horror and self-accusation when she found it deserted. She was carried senseless to a couch, but not before she had engaged the Superior to give her at least a temporary sanctuary. 'She was,' she said, 'pursued, but intended, after seeing her father and her sister, now the sole desire of her life, to take the veil.'

"Poor Alice! no one knew if she had told the abbess to whom she was married, or how the strange visions of her previous life had been dissipated by the fearful reality of an

union altogether opposed to the one her fanciful dreams had predicted, and destined to afford a melancholy contrast to the tenderness which had made her lot happy in her days of girlhood.

"Sad, timid as she was, her grief and her fears were alike augmented on the following day, when she received a visit from the Superior, to inform her that a person—a stranger—had inquired for her, and been admitted. He was now awaiting her below.

"There was no need to ask a description of this visitor. Alice seemed to expect him, and only heaved a faint sigh, whilst her cheek assumed a still more ashy hue, as the Superior said, 'He was a tall, dark man,' and added, with a harsh glance at the poor victim, 'that for her part she did not know, she had never seen the terrible captain of the banditti that there had been so much talk about; but from the descriptions, it seemed to her that this man would do to sit for his picture.'

"Poor Alice uttered a half cry, but as sud-

denly quelled it. She buried her face in her hands.

"'Alas! I cannot see him,' she said, throwing herself at the feet of the nun; 'have mercy on me, mother, for the love of heaven. I dare not meet him. I fled—I eluded him. He would, perhaps, revenge himself by my death.'

"'You had better see him,' was the cold reply; 'in fact, he is your husband, and has a right to demand your presence. All I can do for you, however, as you have thrown yourself upon my protection, I will. You shall, if you desire it, only see him through the grated partition which we usually employ for the purpose, in the case of the sisters and their friends.'

"Alice followed the Superior without further preparation to the apartment indicated, but with slow and heavy steps. Her head was bent upon her bosom, and her hands were meekly crossed there. She was calm, but it would be impossible to express the horror

that sat frozen, as it were, upon her countenance; so it was said by one who saw her at the time.

"At the door of the apartment the Superior left her, and, as she stated, went to summon the visitor to the other entrance, which opened upon the opposite side of the grating. Near Alice was a young novice, whose face betokened the pity she experienced for one with whom she had often exchanged a greeting in days gone by. Alice looked at her, and glanced round to see if she were observed; then bending forward, whilst a ray of hope crossed her features, whispered to the girl to alarm the entire convent if more than a certain time elapsed and she did not return. The next moment she had entered the chamber, and closed the door behind her.

"The person at whose command she came was already there. He stood outside the grating, which, poor Alice noticed with a glance of fervent thankfulness, was heavy and

massive, and capable of affording protection from any violence that might be offered. She advanced to within a few feet of the place he occupied, and stood awaiting what he should say. He did not keep her long in suspense.

"'So! I have found you.'

"It was dreadful to see a countenance, originally capable of much that was beautiful and noble, so marred by rage and violence, the sport of diabolic promptings, as that of the man who thus addressed his trembling victim.

"'What can you expect? What is your design in coming here?' He spoke with far more composure than she had expected, and even attempted to infuse some degree of gentleness into his voice. 'This is the way you keep faith with the man to whom you pledged yourself at the altar! I go away for a few hours, and when I return you are nowhere to be found.'

"'I told you I should fly. You have fre-

quently heard these lips call upon Heaven to give me the opportunity of leaving you. I shall never return.'

"'We will see that. But I do not wish to terrify you. Do as I request by fair means, and you are your own mistress. If you will write that letter, you are at liberty to remain here. The Superior will, doubtless show you every kindness.'

"He said this with a sneer on his lips.

"Alice looked at him, and her whole soul recoiled. She strove however, and successfully, to control the repulsion she experienced, and made an attempt to excite some compassion in the flinty breast of him she addressed.

"'Alas!' she said, her eyes swimming with tears; 'be merciful to me! Have you no remains of that love you swore to me when I first saw you in my solitary turret? How I loved you! How I lived upon your smile! Franz, my mother is dead!'

"She bowed her face upon her hands.

"'Your mother dead—of course she is. I knew it all along. Where would have been the use of telling you, when it would have made you ten times worse?'

"'And still you would not let me go to see her—to comfort my poor father! Alas! you never loved me. And I to believe every word you uttered!'

"'The more fool you. None but a mad woman would have done so. Had you possessed a grain of intelligence, you would have seen that the work of deception was done for me. You had arranged the whole: the books and the nonsensical instruments you found in that old deserted turret, put strange notions into your head. You were determined to have a lover, and one of a superior nature. You yourself chose the part I should play; I overheard your wild speculations, and profited by them.'

"'Alas!'

"'I tell you that it was the idea of the money that prompted me; and your share of

it, depend on me, I will have. But I'll not trust you within earshot of the old man, you may take my word for it.'

"'What can you do without me?'

"'Much. I will make you safe first, my pretty mistress. Come, Alice, be good-humoured, and give me the letter I want. It is soon done. Only say that I am your husband; that you invest me with full authority to receive the portion which of right is yours. I am not mercenary; I will give you a fair share; but take you to England I will not. You would discover all.'

"Alice was silent.

"'Will you come back with me and write the letter? Yes or no? I have no time to delay!' and he stamped his foot vehemently. 'Cospetto! answer, will you?'

"'What? Tell my father — my poor father—that I am a happy wife? Pray his forgiveness, only to inform him he is never more to see me? Give up the hope of ever again embracing Carlen, my sister—my dar-

ling sister—and go down to my grave with this bitter sin, which killed her who is gone, unexpiated, unatoned for, by pleadings for pardon to those who are left? No, it cannot be!'

"'What—you refuse?'

"'I have no alternative.'

"'Bethink you! All shall be as you wish. Can you desire a happier life than to command, a queen here, all the brave fellows who call me captain? I shall be gone but a short time; I will return with the wealth we need. As murder is distasteful to you, we will content ourselves with the pursuit only of those whom we can innocently pillage. Thus you will have saved the lives of many in whom you so philanthropically interest yourself.'

Alice looked up, and met the expression of his countenance, which conveyed far more than even the implied sneer in his words.

"'Never!' she uttered, frantically. 'Franz,

if I were once deceived, I know you now! I know your soul is as black and dastardly, as your countenance is fair and noble; your heart filled with mischief and ferocity, even while the blandest accents are upon your tongue! I have watched your career ever since the hour when, by delusion and falsehood, you beguiled me from my home; but trust me, the measure of your crimes is full; not long shall the world groan under the fearful load!'

"'Beware!'

"'Listen to me! These are the last words I shall speak with you. Would that they might ring in your ears in time to come, when I am gone, perchance, and hold you back from further wrong. Repent, before it is too late! repent, and abandon this life, these evil deeds, of which only the mention makes me tremble; repent, I say! for by all that is sacred, by my lost home, by my own broken heart, if you pursue your present course, I

will betray those secrets which I have, as you well know, in my keeping, denounce you to the authorities, and —'

"Carried away by the earnestness of her appeal, poor Alice had forgotten the desperate character of the man she addressed. She advanced involuntarily nearer to him, and extended her hands in an agony of pleading and exhortation.

"The villain, crafty as merciless, had her almost in his grasp; his eyes flashed fire, and a terrible oath burst from his lips. As she concluded her sentence, he dashed with a sudden Herculean effort one of the oak bars, strong and massive as it was, from its place, and, seizing her firmly by the wrist, drew her arm through the grating, while with his other hand he felt for his stiletto.

"The steel flashed before her eyes, she had no power to cry out.

"'I have you now!' he muttered. 'It is my turn: no power can save you!'

"But, miraculous as was the intervention,

just as poor Alice did, indeed, give herself up for lost, deliverance arrived. The novice had heard the voice of the poor forlorn one, raised in threatening accents; she had, from circumstances, guessed that the Superior was not likely to interfere, even were mischief enacting. With rapid promptitude, she rushed to the door, and regardless of consequences, shouted, as if a friend's warning, to the bandit:

" 'Quick! quick! you have no time to lose! The police! the police!'

"At that terrible word the coward started, with blanched cheek; and as he hastily stepped back, lost his grasp of the miserable Alice. How it was, she scarcely knew; but in the interval of a single moment the stiletto had fallen at her feet; she was free—alone! her intended assassin had departed!

"After uttering a brief ejaculatory thanksgiving, Alice's first thought was to fly from the spot which had witnessed her narrow escape. She rushed to the door: it had been locked from the outside!

"If the first thought of relief from her impending fate had been wild and ecstatic, so the revulsion of feeling to the depths of despair, was correspondent in intensity. She was quite alone; both the doors in the corridor were closed; her only hope was in the assistance of the novice, and even now she might be suffering the penalty of her timely assistance. Alice had recognised her voice; she doubted not that the bandit had precipitately retreated, deceived by the stratagem; but he would discover he had been duped, and return, and experience had taught her she could expect nothing from the Superior.

"After much thought, poor Alice resigned herself calmly to her fate; she picked up the stiletto, and placing it in her bosom, determined to sell her life dearly, should it again be menaced.

"The hours went on, the light faded—it was dusk. As she sat with her eyes bent upon the floor, a hurried tap was heard. It was the novice.

"Alice ran to the door at the sound of the voice. Alas! but little comfort did it give.

"'I know not how you can escape,' said the girl, and her voice shook as she spoke; 'but if by any means you can jump from the window, or succeed in getting free, delay not, or you are lost. The door is double-locked; the Superior has the key. Fortunately, no one heard me give the false alarm to the villain who was with you; but there are those in the convent who say that the Superior knows more of him than she chooses to confess; and even now a letter is brought her which — Hist! I am called. Farewell! Alas! I can do no more! Heaven help you!'

"'Heaven, indeed, help me!' echoed the prisoner, as she retraced her steps, 'for there is no earthly aid which can avail!'

"She had already examined the windows; they were barred with stanchions of iron, and afforded no exit whatever. Again she seated herself, and her eyes sought the ground.

"What! had the darkness brought her relief, when light failed to assist her? As she looked fixedly upon the flooring, something glistening caught her eye. Scarcely hoping, slowly and mechanically she rose, and going to the place, stooped over it and felt with her finger. It was a ring in the stone, and within it a spring fastening, wonderfully like the one which had formerly given her ingress to her favourite turret. By help of the stiletto she lifted it; it would have been impossible without.

"The exact course of Alice's escape were never discovered. All that was known was, that the stone was found lifted from its place, and the passage to which it led silent and empty; though the concealed door at the extremity had been forced, and was found wide open. Whether she achieved all by her own strength, or found unexpected aid in reaching the outlet, was doubtful; but she was probably assisted by several peasants, who relieved her from the dangerous task of crossing the tor-

rent alone (the passage leads to the rocks below, half-way down the precipice), and found means for her to arrive at the town hard by, whence she proceeded to England.

"News came afterwards that she had safely reached her friends; but it was believed her mind never regained its former state after the terrors she had undergone. Perhaps from her youth she had been mentally feeble on certain points; but one thing I know, although our sisters would not like me to say so, that the terrible objects that met her view, there below, in the vaults, skeletons of nuns chained up, as it was supposed, for the place had been used as a dungeon and prison for the refractory, as well as an escape in time of danger, effectually prevented her embracing the convent life; and she lived always with Carlen, who was happily married in her adopted country. As for Franz, the bandit, he was killed a short time after, in a mutiny, by some of his men, a drunken riot, which ended his life in a manner exactly concordant

with what had gone before. From that time the passage has been closed, and the entrance to it is walled up. Alice was the last fugitive who passed its dangerous portal."

Just as the novice reached this point of her recital, our coachman came to inform us, that he had completed the necessary repairs to our carriage. He had taken his time certainly, and there was little doubt the good cheer proffered to ourselves had been extended to him, judging by the favourable effect produced upon manners previously bearish. The sky, he reported, looked still heavy, but, if we hastened on, we might yet perform the remainder of our journey with perfect ease. Should there be no moon he had lights, all he begged therefore was that we might immediately take our departure. Accordingly with many kind farewells, and the present of some trifling trinkets from Miss Fullerton and myself, which the good sister seemed to prize even more than the pecuniary payment, we

left the hospitable spot, and again pursued our path up the mountain.

Every object she had mentioned now interested us doubly. There was the torrent; in the distance, the bridge across which poor Alice had escaped on the night of her flight. We sighed as we passed the old "Heim-Haus," looming calm and sepulchral in the dusky air; and half expected to see the tall figure of the bandit, who had formerly made his retreat deep below its foundation, in caves undreamed of by the traveller, steal forth and seize our horses' heads, while the cry of voices and the sharp click of the pistol startled the trembling echoes around.

The air was profoundly still, and the dull grey hue of the atmosphere inspired none of us with the desire to converse. Mrs. Fullerton took a book from her travelling bag and laid it open on her lap, her husband nodded into a nap, Mr. Driscoll lit his cigar, and Jeannette Fullerton gazed abstractedly at the

varied grandeur presented to the eye. From time to time the younger gentleman stooped from his seat on the box to exchange glances of sympathetic admiration with her, and I confess I began to entertain strong misgivings from a whispered word or two which reached me, that he was wishing himself at her side, and consequently my luckless self, hundreds of miles away.

After the first hour or two, the temperature became considerably colder, and a sharp wind gradually arose, ascending the ravine and almost blowing us before it. The leaden aspect of the heavens increased, and once or twice I noticed our driver look upwards and shake his head. Suddenly a turn in the road brought us in sight of the mountain which we had previously scanned from afar. It was gigantic, robed from summit to base in eternal snows, whilst immense glaciers were discernable streaming from its sides. Great masses of rock, "mountains in themselves," stood out in bold relief against the sky, those nearer

to us adding wild picturesqueness to the fore-ground.

We were silent for a few moments. Miss Fullerton spoke first.

"How sharply cut appears the outline of those distant peaks: *aiguilles*, I think they call them."

"Not the most favorable sign in the world," was Mr. Driscoll's response, "for us at least."

"Why? is there any chance of bad weather."

"I think there is a marked change in the atmosphere."

"We can all testify that," put in Mr. Fullerton, taking his cigar from his mouth to knock off the ashes."

"Yes, and the driver appears to think those clouds are over-charged with snow."

"Snow at the end of September?" Mrs. Fullerton asked.

"You forget where we are, my dear madam. In England we have the four seasons in a day, and we therefore must allow

some license for whims and fancies, to the weather of other countries."

"Right enough, there, Driscoll. My wife forgets we cannot order the clerk of the weather as we English quarrel with the cook of our neighbour's kitchens. By Jove! it gets thicker every minute, and monstrously cold into the bargain."

"As nipping to one's feelings as woman's coquetry"—

"Pray don't get satirical, Mr. Driscoll," observed Miss Fullerton. "Your imagination is enough to thaw the ice, and bring down an avalanche of wet, in which case—"

"We must have recourse to the family umbrella. I really long for rain in order to see that carefully packed article of Miss Tressingham's in the oilskin case, expand itself. Ugh! now we're in for it."

We were indeed; for at the moment, with a hollow, reverberating sound, the wind careered through the mountain crevices, bringing with it a dense mist charged with snow.

Mr. Fullerton hastened to assist the driver in shutting up the carriage, while Mr. Driscoll seemed to forget the scantiness of his own wraps in his somewhat superfluous attention to the young lady, who was fast approaching the appearance of a mummy. As three ladies were somewhat embarrassing to any cavalier but Briareus, Mrs. Fullerton and I established a "hand-in-hand society," and tried to assist each other as much as we could.

We all eagerly inquired how far we were from shelter.

"There is a *Maison de Refuge*," our driver explained, "which we can soon reach, if the horses will only face the keenness of the snow, but we must push on, for last year almost at this very spot—"

He was proceeding with one of those stories of horror with which the drivers of all countries think to enhance the value of their services, when he was cut short by Mr. Driscoll. Even at this time it was impossible to resist the influence of the sublime, as the grey hue

of the mountains rendered them yet sterner; and their gaunt shapes dimly shaded by the storm, simulated fantastic and gigantic figures, clothed in a mysterious veil. The fir trees, dark and funereal, bowed before the storm, like subjects owning the power of some invisible and irresistible sovereign. We were anxiously looking out for the guide, our driver had promised, and watched each other's faces earnestly, every now and then scrutinizing the covered places for shelter, made upon the road. The landmarks seemed to be obliterated, and the conversation at last subsided into silence. I confess the thought of bones lying bleached in the snow, half way down some unsuspected glacier, more than once intruded on my mind, as constantly the wheels grated against the heavy stones, which alone indicated the barrier of the precipice. The windows became covered with drifted snow, which was now changing its character into the appearance of morsels of solid ice. Under these circumstances it may be easily con-

ceived that our hearts leaped at the welcome tones of a cheery voice, although circumscribed within the short exclamation, "Hola!" It was our guide.

Hastily ascending the box without stopping the horses, so slow was now our ascent, the man placed himself by the side of Mr. Driscoll, and by his merry laugh, speedily allayed our fears. I fancy we all "drifted" into slumber; for myself, I was suddenly awakened by a bright glare pouring out from an open door. We had reached our resting place, and were gratified by hearing the sounds of our own language, spoken by another traveller, a young Englishman, who had just been forced, like ourselves, to take shelter at the house.

It was not the usual *hospice* at the summit of the Pass, for our tired horses and driver had decided between them that it was impossible to reach that place. Our present sojourn was a "Casa," kept by some of the Cantonniers, whose business it was to maintain the road in repair, and who had not unfrequently a house

full of weather-bound travellers to provide for.

I could have pardoned a Persian for adoring the God of Fire, as I felt the genial glow of the apartment we now entered, though badly lighted, its floor rough, ceiling patched, and walls simply boarded. It had a kind of Robinson Crusoe aspect, with its chamois skins, stag horns, and boars' tusks. A table ready laid in the centre, looked cheerful enough, nor was there wanting a sprinkling of guests, the variety of whose aspects interested me. Besides the English traveller spoken of, we found three other young men, on a walking expedition. I call them young, though one scarcely justified the appellation upon further scrutiny. The hair and eyes were black as night, but the countenance told of thoughtful years, and sharp experiences. He was from France, and had as companion, a German student, with long lank locks, a meerschaum pipe, and a physiognomy moulded strongly after the Yankee go-a-head type,

combined with that of a sombre and mystery-loving Moor. The third had that clear, bright complexion, open forehead, and quick eye, which at once pronounced him a child of the North; corroborated by his name, Lindsey. With the ready heartiness of youth, the three seemed to have struck up a frank friendliness which they extended to ourselves. It was arranged that we should join company, a measure no less pleasant than necessary, seeing we should else have deprived each other of the only table the apartment afforded.

But where were we to sleep? This question appeared a puzzle. Mrs. Fullerton and I exchanged glances, while Miss Jeannette went off into a quiet fit of merriment at our blank expression, after examinin the accommodation offered. Though the building appeared strong enough for a fortress, and was evidently of no modern construction, having been added to by various grotesque attempts at extension, it was but one story high; the bedrooms being mere pigeon holes, and impregnated with the

flavour of tobacco from the common *salle*. It was useless, however, to repine, so Miss Fullerton and I agreed to share the same apartment, or as she expressed it, to "roost on the same perch." Mr. Driscoll had already declared his determination to spend the night in what he significantly termed the "banquet-hall," Heaven save the mark! As for the men, their arrangements seemed as obscure as the locality itself, which they designated "a den."

In fact, we were resolved to be comfortable. Wraps were removed, a few necessaries unpacked, the luggage stowed away in a kind of out-house, and we finally sat down to supper, with Spartan sauce far superior to the best French condiments, and a determination to banish care and discontent.

We found a much better meal than might have been expected, and the people of the house both civil and attentive. If the *potage* were not equal to the celebrated *purée* of the Maison Dorée, it was, at all events, less greasy

than a similar production we had tasted at Geneva. It must be admitted that though the Swiss are the best confectioners in Europe, their cookery manifestly improves as you approach the oil and wine of Italy. Besides we had good experience of the latter school in the way of frying that peculiarly delicate fish found in the mountain lakes, a rival to English mullet. Eggs that had not sustained a bath of lime-water, or a transit across the Channel; cheese resembling Gruyère, but which did not oblige the epicure to converse at arm's length with his listener; butter, never forgetting the mountain strawberry served with a liberal supply of excellent cream; in fact, only one thing was sour at the table, the wine, which so far from imparting a vinegar aspect to the party, proved its true Bacchanalian properties, by the increased mirth it diffused through all. Have I mentioned the whole entertainment? No! I forget, there was a fowl, the patriarch of the poultry yard: Mr. Driscoll declared that the creature died from

anguish of mind, at the thought of having nothing on its body, and as travellers owe no favour to the Emperor of Austria, proposed that we should send the bird to that monarch, as the heralds say, "displayed" after the manner of his escutcheon, and as a type of the scantiness of his hospitality.

How selfish people are, when they are happy! I believe we all feel much more snug in bed on a dark December night, from thinking of the "unhoused" wretches, who as Lear says, have "to bide the pelting of the pitiless storm." Not that this springs from unkindness; nevertheless the thought occurred to me, as I saw how disgusted everybody seemed when the sound of bells, followed by a rapid shuffling of feet in the passage, announced a fresh visitor. From the "Sapristi!" of the Frenchman, to the "By Jove!" of Mr. Fullerton, the exclamations with which we recognised the new arrival, expressed anything but welcome. The fact is we had begun to

Our imagination promoted the stranger to the peerage at once. He was a Milord evidently. So thought Mr. Fullerton, who pronounced the wine which was courteously proffered to him, the finest he had ever tasted in his life.

"Worth a guinea a bottle, sir. Cannot get such now. Why that must be thirty years old, at least."

"You are a good judge," was the reply. "It has been forty years in bottle; and the new generation has grown too calculating to lose the interest of money by keeping wine so long."

The thermometer of our estimation went down; £ s. d. make or mar an opinion.

"He's a Liverpool merchant," whispered Mr. Driscoll to Miss Fullerton: then turning to the stranger—"a great quantity of French wines will soon come to us, if the excise duties should be repealed, a question much agitated."

"I have reason to believe that several

sessions must pass, to say nothing of an equally necessary approximation of nationalities, before such reforms, if they be reforms, can be adopted."

What was he now? a wine merchant, a journalist, a Member of Parliament, a Physician, a Queen's messenger, or an exciseman? We were abroad in every sense of the word, and left to the fates the solution of the mystery.

Supper was now concluded. We had dawdled over it to the utmost limits of our attendants' patience, and felt very sanguinary notions towards time. How was it to be killed? Dr. Johnson said that the man was contemptible who was affected by the weather; certainly our spirits were not, but our anticipations were, and like resolute generals, we set about making the best of our means to hold out against the threatened siege. The report of Mr. Lindsey, followed by that of the owner of the house, was disheartening in the extreme. No chance of moving at present,

He evidently considered it a *table d'hôte.* We were determined to undeceive him.

"A little gravy, my dear?"

And Mr. Fullerton sedulously ignored the stranger.

"You were saying," said Mr. Driscoll to the young Englishman, "that the road on the Italian side has been thickening with snow for many hours past."

"The peasants," chimed in the pedestrians, "anticipate a very heavy fall."

"Bless my soul! it will be excessively awkward. As for travelling again at the rate we have done—"

"It will probably prevent travelling at all," said the Scotchman, "for if the road becomes blocked up, *here* will be our 'destiny,' as the fatalists say."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated the new comer.

The remark was equivocal, but not complimentary; it might have been almost insult-

ing, had not a lurking smile betrayed the mock-seriousness of the speech. We felt rebuked; the stranger was, in military phrase, "master of the position." We were conscious we had been disagreeable, and were ashamed of ourselves, nor could forbear giving way to a sudden fit of mirth, as we thawed under the genial tact with which the astute interloper had treated our unkindliness.

Mr. Fullerton was the first to come to the rescue.

"Upon my word, sir, it gives me pleasure to anticipate your society in our imprisonment, ha! ha! Let mutual adversity teach us cordiality at all events. Shall I send you some of this chamois? I can give it you hot, and delays are dangerous," with another gleam of mirth.

"Thank you, my man is preparing something for me. Ah! here he comes."

And a well-dressed and perfectly drilled courier entered, with a small covered dish, flanked by a decanter of Madeira.

"Well, never mind, let us begin at once," said her husband. "Anything is better than listening to the mournful sighing of the wind. Who will lead the forlorn hope, and volunteer to suffer—"

"Or make his auditors suffer," said Mr. Driscoll.

"Don't interrupt me, my fine fellow, or we'll saddle you with the first story."

"But if the gentleman knows none," said I.

"He can invent," said Mr. Seymour; "which that he may do with greater facility, let us order fresh glasses, have in some coffee, and—"

"Who's to begin?" exclaimed several.

"Draw lots."

It is needless to say that our proceedings upon this advice caused considerable merriment, nor that they were not very fair. It was decided ultimately, after several attempts had proved abortive, that Mr. Seymour himself was the doomed party; and although he laughingly declared that he yielded only to

the force of circumstances, and that properly one of the young men was entitled to precedence, yet he agreed—upon the consideration that they should superintend the fire, and the management of the "commissariat," as he termed it—to "victimize" his auditors by a page from his own family archives, declared to be founded on fact, and called, in allusion to our present circumstances,

"AN EVENTFUL NIGHT."

AN EVENTFUL NIGHT.

My grandmother was quite young when she found herself heiress to a large fortune.

This was an event the more satisfactory, because it was unexpected. On looking at her own image in the glass, however, another discovery, still more charming, resulted; for as she had arisen from the diluting influences, the superficial froth of the old routine of feminine education, mentally, a Phidian model, solid and fair-proportioned, so physically, she had emerged from the school-girl chrysalis, into the region of butterflies, a beauty!

To Tempe—the material type of earth's brightest fable, pleasure—resorted every neighbouring denizen of the mythological Ossa and Olympus; and philosophers, like the gods of old have, time out of mind, willingly descended from the loftiest flights in pursuit of the phantom Happiness, all agreeing that it was to be found alone in the flowery meadows of youth. It is true that each invested the deceptive vision with the lines of his own fancy. The Lydian monarch, we are told, supposed it to exist in riches; while the soul-dreamer Plato, and the mystic Orpheus, placed the supreme good respectively in Idea, and its nearest visible embodiment, Beauty. Nor will we question the theory of Epicurus and Aristotle, that happiness is synonymous with virtue, and literally as well as figuratively, the latter's own reward.

My grandmother, it will be seen, though possessed of all these qualifications for the attainment of the great worldly chimera, begged to differ entirely in opinion from the afore-

said sagacious gentlemen. She had, doubtless, a "mission" of her own, which rendered her strongly opposed to sitting down contentedly with present advantages. Who ever refused to enrol himself a candidate in the great race, even though its prizes are so equivocal that their character has never yet been defined; even though the goal be so illusory that it recedes from our grasp in exact proportion to our eager advances?

To many, the position in which she was now placed would have been a perilous and trying one; to my grandmother it was nothing of the kind. High-spirited and keen-witted, her great personal beauty was forgotten when she spoke. Few attempted to measure swords with her a second time, and that must have been a dull or a callous spirit which could unmoved, behold the scathing curl of her lip, when contempt rose from its ordinary depths to the surface. Yet was there enough of the woman, beneath an exterior, sometimes impassible, sometimes masculinely

decisive, ever wild and original, to render her, not only sensible of the necessity to her own heart of love and sympathy, but exceedingly alive to the fact that of a host of admirers, there was possibly not one, who thought of aught beyond the broad lands of the heiress, in endeavouring to secure her for a wife. My grandmother cherished the wild and romantic desire, in her heart of hearts, to be loved for herself alone, for her own radiant orbs rather than *pour les beaux yeux de sa cassette*, and she registered a vow, in exact keeping with the usual decision of her resolves, that she would never yield her hand to mortal man, of whose sincerity and actual attachment she had the smallest reason to be dubious.

Two guardians had been appointed to watch over the interest and happiness of the heiress; one of these died within a few months of his accession to the onerous duties of the post, and the entire charge reverted to the other, respecting whom no one could give my grandmother very lucid information.

Immediately upon the border land between England and Scotland, so immediately that some there were who still persisted in believing it a contested point to which country the domain in reality belonged, and not many miles from the town of Langholm, there stood, about the middle of last century, a noble mansion, surrounded by widely undulating scenery, well studded with flourishing trees. The building, grey, and hung in portions with a drapery of ivy, was flanked closely on three sides by a moat, on the fourth a flower-garden, rich in ornamental shrubs, presented a pleasing foreground to the long line of distant hills rising one above another, far as the eye could reach. Beyond this parterre extended the fourth side of the watery barricade.

This mansion was occupied, about the year 1746, by a grim, soldierly-looking personage, wifeless and childless, for the stream of war had absorbed the tenderer currents of life; the last of a long line, if not generally beloved, at least universally respected by the neigh-

bourhood. Hither my grandmother was consigned, and with a considerable amount of horror she made acquaintance with the distant and isolated retreat, and its starch and somewhat repulsive master. Perhaps it was as much *pour s'amuser* as from any sympathetic feeling, that she accepted the first man who proposed to her, in the wild and inaccessible region in which she found herself immured. Perhaps she dreaded that what was at first termed a visit, might stretch into a permanent residence. However it might be, she forgot her coquetry for awhile, absolutely received her admirer's protestations without a single sarcasm, and favoured his earnest proposal with a serious answer. The day was fixed for their marriage.

My ancestress had Scotch blood in her veins; she found much to charm and admire in the country of her mother. She became interested in the manners, attached to the national characteristics which presented themselves; and although she had brought a

fine English waiting maid with her, no very lengthened period elapsed before occasion was found to dismiss her, and a young girl from the north, whose father had lately come hitherward in search of work, installed in her stead.

A light-hearted and buxom creature was that same Janet, and my grandmother's spirits rose after the girl had been with her some little time. Never was mirth so contagious as Janet's; never did eyes sparkle so wickedly at a practical joke, or dry humour own so grave and demure a votary. She knew stories without end, about all kinds of wild and startling circumstances; believed firmly in apparitions and fetches, and tried hard to infect her impracticable mistress with the same faith. But the patriotism of the girl was her most extraordinary feature; her devotion to the Stuarts knew no bounds; and my grandmother felt every drop of Caledonian blood fire in her veins, when, after imbibing a detail of young Prince Charlie's romantic his-

tory, his personal attractions, his unassailable gentleness, and his indomitable courage, she was compelled to listen to her guardian's cold and measured anathemas against the "Pretender," echoed by her lover's lips, who was also a soldier and a staunch Royalist, and, moreover, engaged in active service against the very object of her interest and compassion.

It was a dull spring evening, not very long after the battle of Culloden had been fought. My grandmother sat playing at chess with her husband elect, who had come for a few days' leave of absence, the reward of a trifling flesh-wound, which she always insisted he inflicted upon himself for that purpose, in the apartment of the young lady, a room more modernised by some tasteful and, to all appearance, slightly foreign hand, than any other in the mansion. A fire burned in the tiled grate, a large Indian screen extended its ample folds behind the seats of the players, and a vase of rich exotics, the lover's gift,

which he had gallantly ridden some dozen miles in the morning to procure, diffused a pleasing odour throughout the apartment.

What a strange thing it is that people, who can bear being vanquished with stoical indifference at any other game, invariably fall into a pet when you beat them at chess. It has been held, by indubitable authority, detrimental to a lover's hopes, to administer the nauseous draught to his "ailing saint," but certes, the whole contents of Apothecaries' Hall would be less destructive to her incipient or even established sentiments in his favour, than a single check-mate. My grandmother played well; for a time defended herself boldly, and even attacked and harassed her adversary, a cool and careful tactician; but just as everything was going exactly as she could wish, the Colonel, her guardian, made his appearance, and routed her manœuvres by the announcement that a party of some half-dozen soldiers had just arrived, and were to be entertained for the night, wearied

with hunting the unfortunate Pretender over many miles of difficult country, but assured that he was concealed in the neighbourhood, where they had suddenly lost all traces of his movements.

Listening to her guardian, and occasionally putting in a mischievous observation which the venerable individual received aghast, and which made the brow of her opponent wax graver and graver, my grandmother lost the game; and in a very great rage she was, so great that her adversary never afterwards forgot his want of tact, in permitting her to do anything but win. She almost quarrelled with both gentlemen, and quite frightened them out of the room; nay when they were gone, it was as much as Janet could do to restore composure to her ruffled demeanour.

"Open the window, girl, for heaven's sake, I want air," said my grandmother, who had worked herself into a perfect pet. "Open the window, and then go down to Ripley, whom I know you are dying at being kept from."

Insidious rebuke! Ripley was a servant of the Colonel's, not of very long standing, having been added to the establishment only a few months before her own arrival, and about as rough a diamond as she could have employed herself in polishing. With strange perversity of inclination, or for some hidden reason not easily divined, the Colonel had invested this man with a great amount of confidence, made him a sort of superintendent over the other servants, and entrusted him with several keys of importance, of which duties, however, he exacted a very strict account. It was customary with his master, who could not sufficiently enlarge upon the "troublous times," nor execrate the *adventurer* who had set England in flames, and was bringing (as he said) Scotland's best and boldest sons to the scaffold, to insist on the bolting and barring of all doors, at a certain hour in the evening; and though the raising of the drawbridge had been since some time discontinued, great exactitude was observed

in locking up the arched doorway in which it terminated.

Perhaps the Colonel's patronage might have originated with the vehement professions of Nathaniel Ripley in favour of the reigning monarch; he certainly took care to be particularly assiduous, as to loyalty, in his master's presence. Sharp were the contests between Janet and himself, many the quarrels induced by the everlasting Jacobin songs she insisted on inflicting upon her admirer, whenever the coast was clear, and she dared indulge herself without fear of reprimand from headquarters.

"There, go, child," said my grandmother, as, blushing and disclaiming, Janet stood the very impersonation of foolish confusion; "go along, I don't want you; and bring me lights in an hour's time; I shall not favour them with my presence again this evening."

Janet needed no second permission; she replenished the fire, advanced to the door of her mistress's chamber, which communicated

with the little saloon, and glancing around it, soon re-appeared and departed. As she left the apartment the tramp of armed feet was heard, and the opening door disclosed the forms of several soldiers, who were pacing along the corridor, with measured tread, towards the rooms appointed for their use. My grandmother could hear their footsteps cease at the entrance to their quarters, and almost simultaneously the clear voice of Janet carroling, in defiant accents, "Charlie is my darling."

"Ay, Charlie is my darling!" echoed the listener, as her lip curled contemptuously, "give me such a bold heart, such a true hand! One man alone, pursued by dozens—hunted like a wild beast—a price set on his head! Heaven grant it be true he has perished! Better a thousand deaths than the terror, the suspense of such an existence, hero though he be."

Thus musing, and approaching the casement, she was about to look forth into the

dull evening, whose hues were still more darkened by the approaching twilight. The apartment was not exactly on the ground floor, but was slightly elevated, and attained by a few steps leading to the corridor upon which it opened. The lattice commanded a full view of the garden, where the few trees which had ventured to expand into foliage were mixed with occasional patches of dark evergreens, looking like blots on the murky atmosphere, and easily transformable, to an imaginative eye, into giant funereal groups.

"I die for excitement!" muttered she, as she drew aside the curtains and prepared to seat herself within the broad embrasure of the window; "this rust is killing me. Alas! why was I not born a man? I might have been Charles Edward—have been—what?" —"dead now," common sense whispered, "on the throne of England," feminine conceit as quickly suggested, "Charles Edward —Ah!"

My grandmother's exclamation was caused

by a most extraordinary occurrence; she started up, shaking violently, and even her energetic and bold spirit was for a moment overpowered, and Janet's revelations of fetches and goblins recurred in one mighty host to her mind, as a figure suddenly revealed itself, and with a bound vaulted through the open window and stood at her side, indefinable for the first few moments through the twilight and her terrors, but speedily evidencing no unearthly visitant by the course of action it pursued.

Recovering, with some effort, an apparent self-command, my grandmother stood in reality quaking, while the intruder with quickness of thought closed the window, and casting one comprehensive glance around, hurried to the door and turned the key in the lock. This proceeding was not calculated to inspire confidence, but fear kept her silent while these manœuvres were in execution; nor could she do more than wave her hand with a characteristic gesture of deprecation and alarm, when

her visitor, advancing, knelt with a rapid but graceful movement at her feet.

He was a tall, slight figure, of some five-and-twenty years old, with noble and decisive features, but attenuated and haggard as if with recent hardship and care. His dress, which had once been handsome, was soiled with travel, and torn here and there as if he had taken no heed of the obstacles opposing themselves to his progress; a plaid, which partially concealed his form, he rapidly unwound from his shoulders, as if for air, as he addressed her.

"Lady!" he said, in a voice of slightly foreign accent, but whose melodious intonation, haste and danger rendered yet more thrillingly pathetic; "Lady! in the name of all that is hospitable, all that is womanly, aid me in concealing myself for a few hours. I am pursued, the bloodhounds are behind me but a trifling distance; they are at fault—I hope have lost my track. It may be they will

not enter here, for I know I am in Colonel ——'s house, and that he bears me no good will."

My grandmother listened for no more.

"My Prince!" she said, making a timid but graceful reverence; she had no strength for another word.

"Oh!" exclaimed the stranger, clasping his hands and regarding the object of his supplication with eyes full of interest and gratitude. "I am saved then! You will not betray, you will succour! Heaven reward you if Charles Edward fail to redeem the debt."

The prayer was scarcely breathed before the quick eye of the fugitive, which commanded the drawbridge and approach, discerned the forms of several mounted soldiers advancing rapidly towards the house. My grandmother's gaze followed his; the sight restored her to action in a moment.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, hurriedly, and for the moment despondent as to the result of

her aid, so deeply required; "alas! they are already here—escape is hopeless! Oh! where shall I hide you?"

With the sensitive eagerness of despair, the fugitive caught my grandmother's exclamation, and watched her speaking features while she hastily shot scrutinising glances around the apartment. The closets and cupboards with which the walls were studded were not to be thought of, neither here nor in the adjoining room; there was no recess, no piece of furniture which could for an instant conceal the figure of a man from search, and that a search would be instituted, appeared evident enough. Slowly and reluctantly she abandoned the investigation.

"Surely they will never intrude upon *my* chamber," said my grandmother, stamping her foot on the ground at the very thought, while her eyes flashed fire, and grasping the only chance that seemed favourable to the safety of her unfortunate guest.

"Alas! hope not for their forbearance,"

replied the Prince, folding his arms upon his breast with a melancholy smile: "Lady! I know they will search everywhere; the chamber of death even, has no sanctity from their invasion. Your very couch, sweet one! will perhaps be sacred but for a few moments, from the rude touch of my *faithful* subjects. You forget the sum offered for my capture—three thousand pounds! Who would not pine with excusable avarice for the price of his monarch's head? Oh, yes! they will come here."

My grandmother's cheek flushed: "I cannot think so, sir," she said, and pondered silently awhile. "At all events, if they should so intrude, you can but jump from the window, and conceal yourself among the shrubs. To-morrow," she continued, with a heavy sigh, "I will find means to obtain the key of the gate, for I see they are already bolting and barring it, or you might swim the moat at once."

"Extend your gaze a little further," said the Prince, pointing significantly towards

several men, already ranged at intervals along the whole line of the water.

"Oh! you are lost beyond all hope!" she exclaimed, frantically. "Yet stay. I will go to my guardian. I will entrust him with your secret; he is the soul of honour; he will aid you; he cannot be so base as to resign his king, seeking shelter and protection, into the hands of murderers!"

"Stay!" said the Prince, gently arresting her; "stay! it is unnecessary. Listen!" he continued, in a hollow whisper, "your door will be assailed in another moment. Thanks! thanks! whilst I have yet time to utter them, and farewell." He advanced towards the window as he spoke.

"Oh, you are mad!" she exclaimed in her agitation, clinging to him, as if her slight figure could oppose any barrier to his intentions. "Will you rush to certain death? Oh, you shall not throw yourself upon the very halberds of the soldiers!"

He hesitated a moment, and his eye dwelt

upon the upturned and anxiously working features of his companion. "Shall I stay here, then, and be made a prisoner before your eyes, or shall I wring that gentle bosom by more closely embracing this friend I hold so near my heart," he pointed significantly to the hilt of a dagger concealed in his vest; "and spanning, in one brief moment, the great gulf between time and eternity? speak! Nay, hush on your life; they are here!"

A hand tried the lock—it resisted; the next moment a rapping was heard, and the Colonel's voice distinctly audible.

My grandmother was no idle trembler; the sound gave her fresh courage.

"Come! come! this instant! enter here!" she exclaimed; "quick!" leading the way as she spoke to her bed-chamber. "We will essay somewhat, at all events; help me, and if I can preserve you, I will."

With a strength only present under circumstances of similar imminence, the frail girl assisted her guest to draw the heavy carved

bed, which looked as if it had never been moved since it was first planted there, slightly from the wall against which it was placed. Small as was the aperture, the lithe form of the young man easily crept within, although a despairing gesture showed he apprehended but little concealment from the shelter. This done, my grandmother flung herself for an instant at full length upon the bed, and rose, leaving the trace of her form plainly visible upon its yielding surface.

Meantime the knocking had never ceased, and more than one voice was raised demanding entrance.

The person addressed heard and noted the tones, as she deliberately threw a white dressing-robe round her.

"*His* voice, too!" she muttered, a scornful smile curling her lip, while she unbound the tresses of her beautiful hair, and tied a lace kerchief beneath her dimpled chin; "he who should protect me from insult, the first to aid and abet these ruffians! But he shall rue it yet."

The expression of countenance with which these words were uttered, promised no great things for the hapless husband elect of my spirited ancestress; as saying them, she advanced with slow and thoughtful steps, although the impatient group outside, was rapidly becoming more outrageous in their efforts to secure her notice.

"Open! open!" they said, "in the name of the King!"

The stern voice of the Colonel rose above the clamour: "Catharine, for heaven's sake, unclose the door! What will these soldiers of our sovereign think of the delay? Open! open!"

"Oh, Catharine, does aught ail you?" inquired the tenderer and somewhat faltering accents of the lover, speaking from immediately the other side of the barrier separating him from her. "Is aught amiss, Catharine? Are you ill?"

"Are you mad?" broke in the Colonel, gruffly.

Despite her anger and dread, a smile broke across the face of the object of these widely different interrogations.

"Neither," she said, slowly unlocking the door, and making a stately reverence; thus giving entrance to the Colonel, his companions, and Janet, who, trembling and agitated, looked ready to clasp her mistress in her arms. My grandmother was very pale; it would have been strange had she been otherwise; her heart was beating violently, for she entertained no doubt of the inefficacy of that concealment to which she had been driven to entrust her visitor. Her lips looked ashy, and in the centre of each cheek there glowed, as the intruders appeared, a bright spot of hectic, rendering the contrast something fearful. Her limbs shook beneath her weight, and as she bent with mock respect, the soldiers who had advanced, exasperated by the delay, fell back awed and amazed to the extremity of the gallery's width.

"Oh, Catharine, it *was* so then!" exclaimed

her lover, springing forward, and supporting her by drawing a reluctant arm through his own. "How ill you look! Good heavens! what can have caused it? Surely," he added, with an appealing glance at the Colonel, "they will not persist in tormenting her by entering her room? Search *here*, at least, is needless."

"We must do our duty—these men have no option," replied the Colonel, in a gentler voice than usual. He had entered prepared for altercation, and was entirely disarmed by the appearance of his ward, and her unusual silence. "I know it is needless, yet not more needless here," he added, raising his voice, and glancing towards the soldiers, "than in any other corner of my poor house; but it shall never be said I dreaded inquiry; no traitor shall be suspected of harbouring beneath my roof, and the search must be complete."

"Take courage, my beloved," whispered the young man; "no one shall insult your

privacy; 'tis but a pure matter of form, they will but glance round your apartments and be gone."

My grandmother had listened with breathless anxiety to the conference; the soldiers were advancing, but one more effort she felt she must make to prevent their entrance. Raising herself to her full height, and withdrawing from a support which, in fact, she never more than then needed, she said in an accent of withering contempt, and with an excellently well-assumed air of surprise:—

"A search! whom, then, am I suspected of concealing? Is it a lover? or has a deserter or a thief been traced here? But I crave your mercy, my brain perhaps is wandering; a headache, which compelled me to seek my couch, has, no doubt increased by your gentle efforts to obtain entrance, rendered me oblivious not only to the fact that I had retired to my bedchamber, and forgotten the door of the saloon was fastened, but to the advent of some pet dog, who must have arrived through the

keyhole, and has, probably, taken sanctuary in some hiding-place as roomy. Pray search for whatever you expect to meet with; no ceremony, I beg; but at least inform me, first, whom or what you hope to find!"

"Madam," said the officer in command of the armed file, coming forward and bowing low before the lady, "permit me to implore your excusal of our enforced duty. It is scarcely an hour since we lost sight of the Chevalier de St George, among the tangled underwood surrounding this domain; it is rumoured he is endeavouring to pass the Border. Pray believe, we would avoid the ungracious task of ransacking a lady's chamber, on a search so fruitless as we know this to be, did we dare omit any spot; were our orders less positive."

"Indeed!" she replied, her heart sinking within her, but with a steady and distinct utterance, and giving up the last hope, while she cogitated in her soul what to do more; "so grave an object! Proceed then, in his

majesty's name; though if these poor fellows are to be benefited by the reward offered for the capture of him they call the Pretender, I advise them to lose no valuable time in looking here."

Thus speaking, she advanced boldly, and with a firm step, and threw open the door of her sleeping apartment; her lover followed closely, casting looks of mingled annoyance and deprecation at her assailants, and of tenderness towards herself; while the soldiers carefully examined the saloon, turning over every object likely to afford concealment even to a child of five years old.

She glanced at them furtively, observing the method of their search; if she had cherished any hope, it must have been crushed now. There was no shadow of doubt they would investigate everything minutely, and another moment she might be the enforced spectatress of a mortal combat her heart bled to predict.

The bold spirit quailed not, however, and

even still the hackneyed words of consolation flew to her lips, and she murmured, "while there is life there is hope." Her lover stood near, and as the soldiers crossed the threshold of her chamber, she suddenly extended her arms, and, clutching a convulsive hold, fell, to all appearance, lifeless on his shoulder.

This unexpected circumstance put a stop for the moment to the inquest. They laid the fainting form at full length upon the bed from which she had apparently so recently risen, and Janet, with the distracted lover, hung over her, endeavouring to recall consciousness to the pale face over which they watched. Lights had been brought, and still more corpse-like she looked in the yellow glare of a torch or two, hastily kindled by the officious attendants.

"Oh, this is intolerable!" muttered the young man, soldier though he was, and well inured to military discipline; "this is murderous! They will kill her with fear and shame!"

My grandmother heard every word, and noted with increasing vigilance the movement of the soldiers; not long did the tide of pursuit stop in wonder over the poor girl's attack. They moved away from the bed, and as gently, to be sure, as they could, turned over the toilet-table, emptied the wardrobes, tossing dresses and furniture apart. The room was tapestried; and could she have watched their progress, the anxious observer would have seen how close was the examination, how hopeless the chance of escape. A bayonet was at intervals pricked through the arras, though a kitten could hardly have hidden behind it without attracting observation. At last they advanced to the bed; some glanced here, some there; presently they moved it, slightly, it is true, but sufficiently to look behind; and at the same time two soldiers coming forward put the Colonel aside, saying apologetically, "By your leave we must pass our bayonets through the bed's head," and suited the action to the words.

A loud scream broke from my grandmother's lips! Suddenly, fatally surprised, she had altogether forgotten her part; the bayonet was, doubtless, buried in the Prince's heart, and she expected momentarily to hear his death-cry!

The effect of her sudden restoration was electric. Sitting erect, and without assistance, her livid countenance and streaming hair startled even the rough men-at-arms, and convinced them that the indisposition they had intruded upon was ending, having been augmented by fear of them, in an attack of delirium. Aghast and silent, the search, already complete, awakened now only remorseful feelings in their breasts; and even the Colonel, hitherto desirous to assist their investigations, turned sternly to the unwelcome visitants, and inquired stiffly, at the same time pointing to his ward with a look needing no comment, "If they were satisfied?"

One personage alone in the assemblage was not thus easily deceived. The lover, his

glance sharpened by affection, had watched with extreme anxiety the features of the invalid; had felt his heart thrill, when her lips quivered instinctively while listening to ascertain in what quarters the scrutiny was proceeding, and had beheld the colour spring unbidden to brow and cheek simultaneously with the announcement, that the protecting drapery must give up its secret.

Involuntarily, the young man made a rapid movement, actuated by pity for the evident distress of his affianced, to arrest the uplifted arm of the soldier, convinced also that concealment of some kind existed; his suspicions lulled, however, when no result whatever followed. No sound broke that profound stillness of the chamber, unnaturally supervening upon the wild shriek of my grandmother. Confounded and paralyzed, vaguely conscious that something was amiss, though doubtful how far his surmises might not be wronging their object, the hapless lover, without questioning the command of the Colonel, which,

under ordinary circumstances, he would indubitably have done, retired from the room just as his affianced, beginning to recover her senses, yet awe-struck at the tragedy she conjectured so near to her, sank upon the pillow in an exhaustion which her attendants mistook for sleep.

As the door closed behind him, he canvassed again and again the circumstances of the case. No one, it seemed, was hidden in the apartment, though every glance, every movement of his mistress, implied the contrary. What was he to think?—Some evidence of falsehood, papers — letters — a picture, it might be, for which she dreaded exposure! No, perish the thought! he would think no evil of her!

Having come to this chivalrous resolution, he dashed out into the garden, agitated and distracted, and endeavoured to cool in the misty moonlight the fevered pulses of his brain. Some time he paced below my grandmother's casement, totally unconscious how

he came there, watching the lights within, and straining his eyes for the shadow of a form; once he almost determined to call her name, or at least Janet's, and learn if the sleep were still unbroken. He altered his mind, however, and was just on the point of returning to the house—for the external influences, alas for poor human nature, as they ever do, had completely obliterated those within, and the drizzling and chilly night had entirely restored him to himself—when something white caught his eye, lying on the ground immediately under the window-ledge; he took it up reverently, as love handles aught appertaining to the dear one. A pang, more acute than that his physical senses would have endured, had the bayonet of the soldier pierced him, darted through the noble and confiding heart of the deceived lover,—it was a man's glove!

Meantime my grandmother, left alone with Janet, and grasping at the faint glimmer of a hope whose reverse her very soul revolted

from, explained in a few unconnected words, the events of the last hour, with her fears for the result.

"No time is to be lost!" she exclaimed, flying to the outer door, and doubly locking it, then returning with the speed of thought to the bedchamber, "sir! prince! oh, if you are yet alive, answer me;—all are departed; only I and my faithful girl are here; answer, and I will bless you, as for a new life."

Breathlessly the two women listened for the reply to this passionate appeal, you might almost have watched their hearts throb; whilst, if you had glanced at my grandmother's temples, from which the hair was put aside, you would have seen the blue veins tracing their course there, like swollen rivers panting to gain the sea. Again was the adjuration repeated, this time with clasped hands, and wild and fixed regard; no sound broke the fearful calm which ensued.

"Help, help, Janet!" frantically exclaimed the lady, "help! it may be only the loss of

blood; he is insensible, perhaps, but not dead—oh, not dead."

And springing to the bed, she strove to move its heavy frame, while Janet, scarcely less agitated, comprehended and assisted with the quickness of light.

For a moment the ponderous mass resisted the combined strength of the pair, but their incredible efforts, induced by fear and compassion, were at length crowned with success. It was dislodged from its position sufficiently to admit of clear inspection, and, with sinking hearts, and that awe concomitant, in all but depraved natures, with the dreaded presence of death, both rushed to the aperture, and steadily, though shrinkingly, prepared to face the worst.

A pause ensued—was the sight so horrible as to paralyse the entire energies of those two strong and devoted hearts? Not so—what then?

My grandmother's eyes encountered but one object, and that not at all of an unpleasant

character, though bearing the legible impress of panic and curiosity. This was the face of Janet peering behind the bed directly opposite to her, and reflecting the surprised and confounded expression which her mistress's countenance, exactly in the same relative position to herself, wore. There was positively nothing intervening between them, no body, no clothes, no blood even, for both held their tapers fully glancing upon the spot; the space between the bed's head and the wall, was as vacant as if it had never been occupied.

Not a word was spoken for a few minutes. Janet's face grew at least six shades paler. Here was a clear case of the phantom influences, and miraculous transactions she had so often vaunted to her mistress, but vaunted in vain. In the midst of her dread, a gleam of exultation shone upon her features, however, for never after this would my grandmother dare to confute her legends again.

"Was he here, indeed, my lady?" said the girl, as, with eyes strained on the vacant

space, the person she addressed seemed striving to penetrate the floor, as if the fugitive must have sunk within its recesses.

"Here—aye—not a short—alas! a long half-hour since," was the almost mechanical answer; "and see," she pursued, shuddering slightly, and moving as if in a dream, "here is the place the bayonet penetrated the wall. Ah, just above my heart! How did it escape his?"

"For Heaven's sake, madam, don't stay there!" exclaimed the poor girl, shivering at her mistress's words. "Come out—on the very spot! Oh, hoot awa', now, suppose a' the bogles were to make off wi' ye, lady dear, and swallow you up as they've swallowed the blessed chiel, Prince Charlie!"

The faithful creature strove to draw her mistress away timidly, but effectually. Slowly retiring, but still holding the light high above her head, my grandmother examined the wall covered in places by the arras, which in others had fallen away. At this moment

the steps of both were arrested, and again their hearts thrilled with emotion as a low tapping was heard against the wall, not many inches from the two terror-stricken faces, whose gaze was riveted on it. A flash of delight, like that of a sunbeam on a November day, shot across my grandmother's feature; to her attendant's horror, she knocked in return.

In another instant a panel slid noiselessly back, immediately in the centre of the space behind the bed, and in the doorway, strongly relieved by a back-ground of sable shadow, his fine features pale, but lit with the triumph of recent escape from captivity or death, stood motionless, but unhurt, the graceful form of the fugitive.

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"I see no other way," said my grandmother, half an hour after, as she sat cogitating with her grateful guest, the further means of his

safety. "You say this friendly passage terminates in the outer wall of the house, but, should you be mistaken, it will be easy to convey you unobserved to the postern; and if I fail in getting possession of the key, never trust my diplomatic talents again."

The speaker was elated beyond words at the success of her manœuvres; she was radiant with delight, buoyant with hope; all should go well now, for in the secret way so providentially discovered, her *protégé* might remain concealed, defying all scrutiny, until a safe opportunity offered for his departure.

Her companion's eyes were fixed with undisguised admiration, upon the beautiful countenance of his preserver.

"That the outlet of the passage communicates with the moat in some place, I have no doubt," he replied, after lifting to his lips the bumper which Janet stood assiduously waiting to replenish, with the old French pledge, "*à vos yeux!*" "When on secreting myself in the narrow recess behind the bed, I heard

you parleying with our assailants, I pressed as closely to the wall as possible, desiring, for your sake, believe me, to give every chance to the contrivance, more than from any faith in the hiding-place itself; and in drawing out my dirk, my elbow almost immediately touched the spring which forms the means of entrance within the passage. Feeling the wall shake, I applied my strength to move the panel; and with scarce an instant's delay, discovered it ran in grooves, and could be easily replaced. Thus, before you had unbarred the door of your apartment I was in comparative safety; but the instinct of self-preservation urged me to remove as far as possible from the scene of action, and I pursued, lit by faint gleams at intervals through crevices in the wall on either side, my way through the entire windings of the labyrinth, when the sound of water fell on my ears, and, glancing through the keyhole of a door terminating the passage, and from which I with difficulty and some noise, removed the

rusty key, I perceived grass, and the bank of a stream of some kind, the moat, of course, before me."

"In this case, it must closely adjoin the entrance-gate," she replied musingly; "for I remember the bank slopes down to the water in every point, save two, those on either side of the drawbridge, where there is apparently solid masonry, for the purpose of supporting the archway and its arrangements."

"For some yards before I gained the door I lost all light, and groped my way with difficulty: this suits your explanation of a subterranean passage across the length of the parterre. And do you really believe the Colonel ignorant of this secret way? Is it not strange?"

"Not at all," she replied. "It is not very many years that my guardian has been resident here: his predecessor, an eccentric relative, died suddenly, and left a will scarcely clear enough to secure his own rights to the heir. But time is going by, and if I delay

too long I shall, perhaps, lose the chance of securing your escape to-night."

The Prince moved uneasily, as if suddenly recalled to a remembrance he wished to forget: the harassed expression came back to his features, but he replied enthusiastically—

"Delay not, then, noblest and fairest creature, the completion of your good work; pursue the intentions you have detailed to me, but never will the heart of him your firmness saved from destruction, cease to beat with enduring gratitude and admiration!"

My grandmother stayed not for his praises, she had taken Janet apart, and was instructing her how to conduct the matter she had at heart.

"Say I am quite recovered, Janet, among the servants; but don't let the Colonel, or you-know-who hear that, or they will be coming; say I never could bear to be beaten at chess, that the rage I was in brought on a fever—anything you like—but that I am quite myself now. Then go quietly to Ripley, and

just tell him whatever you think will bring him up the easiest; all, then, will be accomplished, and you will have played your part, a very important one, in the evening's events."

Janet seemed to doubt her powers. Whatever penchant she had for Ripley, she undertook the part of messenger to him with dislike; she whispered to her mistress, suggested objection, was over-ruled, and finally departed. "Take the key and lock me in," the latter said, "and tap twice for admittance when you bring him."

The period of the waiting-maid's absence was spent in a conversation, the particulars of which my grandmother never detailed; so agreeable was it to both parties, that a very perceptible annoyance might have been discovered on their faces, when the interview was brought to a close. My charming ancestress was, as I have already hinted, a bit of a coquette; she perceived the impression she had created, and, though her heart was not free, yet that woman must either be very

elevated or very depressed in the moral scale, who can entirely stifle the emotions of pleasure and exultation she experiences, when eyes utter admiration, and lips breathe compliment, and the admiration is unfeigned, the compliment delicate.

Janet's rhetoric seemed most successful, for albeit the summons to Ripley carried with it sundry misgivings, from causes best known to that worthy individual, ten minutes scarcely elapsed before a knock announced Janet's return, and the fugitive had only time to ensconce himself behind the screen, where a significant smile from my grand-mother directed him to hide, when the girl opened the door and ushered in her companion, whom she left with her mistress.

Ripley entered with the air of a man ill at ease, yet determined to carry all off by a half-insolent air of bravado. My grand-mother sat stately but inconsequent, bearing, however, the impress of recent indisposition, in an arm-chair beside the table, one hand supporting

her cheek; and as Ripley advanced towards her he cast upon her furtively inquiring glances, endeavouring to read the motive for which she had summoned him to her presence. In vain—never did an intelligent face express less of readable purpose than did hers at that moment.

"You are doubtless aware why I have sent for you, Ripley," she said at length, playing carelessly with a letter she had taken from the casket beside her, and held lightly upon her knee.

"I, my lady? no, indeed! Janet forsooth mentioned something, but for the life and soul of me I could make nothing of her Scotch gibberish."

"There is no occasion for many words," she replied; "you may judge of the importance I attach to your plain answers to the questions I have to ask you, when you see, although I have been much indisposed this evening, I determined to see you, late as is

the hour, rather than delay. You are in love with my maid?"

"Well, madam! and what then?" Ripley said, somewhat relieved, and recovering all his impudence, for he had dreaded the lynx-eyed lady's discovery of several peccadilloes not intended for public cognizance. "I love the girl, and mean to marry her, and what's more, the Colonel makes no objection, which I take it is all that's wanting anyhow, saving your presence."

"Very well; you intend to make her your wife, but one little circumstance exists which you appear to forget; I have it upon good authority that you are already married."

This was a random shot of my grandmother's; she had scarcely decided how to attack her victim, when something, it would be difficult to say what in his manner, suggested a thought which at all events she determined to act upon. You may imagine her surprise when she found she had unconsciously

stumbled on something very near the truth.

Ripley turned pale, shambled about, and fidgetted; he looked completely crestfallen; but nevertheless faltered out:—

"Who has dared to come to your ladyship with such a falsehood in his mouth?"

"I have that as well as several other charges against you to advance," said my grandmother, coolly glancing at the open letter, as if to refresh her memory, "and I have no doubt of any of them; we will go over them one by one, if you please. First, however, tell me, are you prepared to inform the Colonel of your marriage?—Come, denial is useless."

The tone of certainty with which these words were said, not only deceived Ripley, but very nearly the unseen listener behind the screen; for an instant he believed she had actual knowledge of the fact she alluded to, but he smiled at himself immediately after,

for he knew, from what she had said, otherwise.

The "knave" all but disappeared from Ripley's face, and left the "fool," predominant, as he exclaimed in accents of the greatest fear and trepidation:—

"Well, now, my lady, you wouldn't go to ruin an honest fellow's chance of a livelihood by declaring his misfortunes? Married! a bitter day it was for me, sure enough, a drunken jade! who'd have brought me to the gallows in six months, if I hadn't left her."

My grandmother raised her handkerchief to her face to hide a smile, Ripley was too much distracted to heed her, however, he was glancing round the room in ludicrous dread that some one should overhear his secret divulged.

"Ripley," she said at length, "I don't wish to be hard upon you; I know every event of your life, even to that business about the theft which got you turned out of—well,

well, I won't mention names, but I am willing to stand your friend now I see you so contrite. There are means of getting free from the incumbrance you complain of, and Janet may yet be yours; I will keep your secret, if it be possible; but first give me any letters or papers you may have received from the girl; I know she has written to you once or twice."

"No, madam, no! but once, and the letter is locked up in safety; I will give it into your hands in the morning, if you so desire."

"Then there is a love-token or two; a guard-chain for your watch; a purse worked in coloured silk; a cravat marked with her hair; have you any of these articles about you?"

Ripley evinced little annoyance at parting with his sweetheart's presents; his fears were principally for his place; so he dived into his capacious pockets, fished out strange articles of all kinds from their depths, and finally produced the required matters, taking care to

remove the money from the purse, which seemed very fairly lined.

"I must see the whole contents of your pockets," said my grandmother, authoritatively. "I cannot permit you to retain anything in your possession calculated to compromise Janet's position."

Ripley obeyed with a sigh; he spread out everything, even to a bunch of suspicious articles, looking uncommonly like pick-locks and skeleton keys, upon the table beside my grandmother, together with sundry other extraordinary hoards, which, even at that moment, excited his companion's risibility. The bunch of house keys, as the heaviest, were nearly the last things to come to light; there were several of them, and my grandmother's eyes sparkled as their quick glance fastened instantly upon the one belonging to the great gate above the drawbridge. As she went on speaking, she took up the bunch and handled it composedly.

"I am satisfied now," she said. "Stop,

you have left something on the floor. What is lying there? A jewel, surely! How now, Ripley? Oh, I see it is only a splinter of glass;" all this time she was adroitly disengaging the key, which she slipped noiselessly off the bunch.

Ripley was busy gathering up the heterogeneous mass of which he had relieved his pockets, and she glanced towards the screen, from beside which a pair of sparkling eyes ventured to peep, assuring her of their owner's participation in her triumph. The appearance of the Prince suggested a fresh manœuvre.

"Ripley!" said my grandmother, in a slow and solemn tone. "Ripley, do you believe in ghosts?"

He started up as if he had been electrified. She went on—

"This evening, do you know, I was sitting here and I heard the strangest noise which could be conceived. Is there any passage, Ripley, which communicates with my apart-

ments, for I have fancied repeatedly a trampling, as of footsteps, along the wall; was there ever a deed of blood committed here, have you heard talk of such?"

"For gracious sake, my lady, don't talk so!" he replied, with a covert glance of dread around him, which showed his assailant she was again successful in her estimate of his distinguishing characteristics. "A passage! of course there is none; how can there be, when the wall of your bedchamber forms part of the back of the mansion? Pray, let me go now, my lady, and if you have mercy upon an unfortunate man who is trying to gain an honest livelihood, and get into better society," this was said with a sanctimonious drawl, "Heaven reward you."

"Oh, go, pray, Ripley," replied my grandmother, pushing the rest of his property towards him, but still with a pre-occupied air, as if listening for some sound that she dreaded being repeated; "but send Janet to me forthwith. You need not make yourself unhappy.

I will keep your secret, as I have said; it may perhaps happen I may assist you. Ha! surely that was a noise? I thought I heard it just now—there it is, indeed!"

My grandmother was right; her unseen accomplice was quick enough in taking a hint, a slow, hollow groan, emitted *sotto voce* and with some ventriloquial skill, was distinctly audible, and produced a most startling effect upon Ripley, while the lady he addressed could hardly keep her countenance.

"The Lord be good to us!" he exclaimed, turning pale; and hastily gathering up the remainder of his belongings with trembling hands, "the Lord be good to us! this is an ungodly place, for certain, and your talk has raised another beside we two."

Hastily stowing away the articles as he spoke, to the joy of his tormentor, who watched him with anxious eyes, he never noticed in his hurry, the abstraction of the key. Another minute, and he had reached

the door, the comparative safety of its vicinity restored his courage.

"I beg pardon, my lady," he said, as she pressed to her heart the precious means of escape, "I suppose I may have those things of Janet's, if so be I promise never to have any more to say to her? and, for the love of mercy, don't let the Colonel—"

He would have said more, but fear was too strong; another hollow groan expedited his departure, and the door closed behind him.

"Now! now!" exclaimed my grandmother, giving in her agitation both hands to the fugitive, who had sprung hastily to her side, and eagerly pressed the slender fingers again and again to his lips. "Now, Prince, you are safe—here is the key—delay not another moment—fly, oh, fly before there is risk of his discovering his loss!"

o o o o

Pending this conversation in my grand-

mother's apartments, her lover had passed through a whole lifetime of agonising reflections. So strange had been her conduct, so important was the elucidation of the mystery, so conclusive the evidence of the glove, that it required a considerable time to decide with certainty upon what construction was the most probable; what line of conduct the best to adopt under the circumstances.

The household had by this time retired to rest; the mansion, although tenanted by a portion of the soldiers who had come in search of the Pretender, was as still as under its ordinary aspect. The solitude and the hour were alike favourable to tender reflections; and after recalling with momentarily augmenting complacency the high tone of her character whom he was so cruelly suspecting, the earnest and noble-hearted young man decided to believe nothing without the testimony of those lips which had never yet deceived him; and, further, that if my grandmother's apartments had been visited by anyone, the offender must

be the Pretender himself, a personage from whom his former suspicions had entirely glanced. A twinge passed over his mind at the lady's want of confidence. He said to himself, "that a single look would have communicated the secret and her fears;" but he soon over-ruled all inimical thoughts, and accounted for her silence in a hundred plausible ways. To sleep, however, was out of the question with such suspense burdening his mind, so he determined to write, and, if possible, to find Janet, and persuade her to convey his billet to her mistress. He was fortunate in his quest, the note was consigned to the Abigail's care, and outside the door of his beloved, he awaited the important answer, which he never doubted would effectually restore his tranquillity.

Alas! never was missive delivered at a more unfortunate moment.

My grandmother had just parted from her young guest. The danger had imparted its own peculiar pleasure; his praises of her

promptitude, exaggerated into heroism by the impassioned Prince, sounded sweetly, as praise ever sounds, even when still less deserved, upon our ears; and, above all, there was that lingering, and almost adoring "farewell," when his eyes had been bent upon hers, as a devotee might gaze upon his guardian saint—nay, something more than such a gaze was to be read, and the woman's heart truly whispered that she had made a conquest of the bold spirit whose aspirations she had dared so much to protect from the silence of the grave. At this very moment, when standing with eyes fixed upon the vacant spot where he had disappeared—the cpen panel—the note was presented, and there was something of reproach in Janet's air, as she gave it, for the girl's quick feminine perception had read as an open book my grandmother's features, and guessed what was passing within, which grated upon her conscious heart; it said, plainly, that she pitied the agonised lover, whose wild demeanour in consigning the billet to her care,

had touched the heart of the simple Scotch girl. My grandmother looked at the note; the hand suggested the writer—perhaps the contrast was not favourable; at all events, in those qualifications which the perverse beauty was then disposed to consider paramount, she was taking him at a disadvantage, but that never occurred to her. Indignantly she seized a pen to answer it, and a hundred pettish expletives rose to her lips during the short time it took her to write—

. . . "You are deceived, and must seek for the owner of your glove among the soldiers, present or departed, who have this evening used such scant ceremony with my guardian's abode. I owe the repudiation of your suspicions, not to your inquiries, but to my own position and fair fame. You are at liberty to come and judge for yourself if my assertion is a true one, that there is no person save Janet and myself in these apartments; but I warn you it will prove a dangerous satisfaction. I

have nothing to divulge, though who knows, with *such* a confessor, how much I may be tempted to invent?"

This note, of whose contents Janet seemed to form a tolerable opinion, the girl conveyed to its destination with a sorrowful visage; a few minutes only, however, elapsed before the messenger returned.

My grandmother was just exclaiming that her guest must have reached the gates, and be by this time in comparative safety, but she stopped hastily, confused at Janet's manner, and inquired what was wrong.

"Oh, madam!" she exclaimed, "I fear mischief. Ripley is still up, and I suspect he has discovered the loss of the key."

"No matter, I can explain it."

"He has been inquiring if you have yet retired to rest, and on my telling him you were doubtless fast asleep, he bit his fingers, and looked beside himself with rage and fear. But the worst is, that whilst I was delivering

the note, he passed and stopped near, as if to try and discover what it contained."

"And did you leave them together when you came away?"

"Yes; what could I do?"

"Then the secret is worth no more. Heaven grant he may be beyond the gates!"

"Alas, no!" said the melancholy voice of Charles Stuart, as he emerged from the dark passage, and advanced towards my grandmother, "I have returned; let your woman stand apart a moment, and I will tell you why."

"Oh, madness, ruin!—they are upon your track!"

"Possibly. You have saved me, and I were a recreant knight, did I hesitate to peril that very safety for your happiness. Oh, Catherine—nay, forgive me once only, and then never more the name will pass my lips, save in my prayers—when I parted from you but now, did you not guess there were thoughts in my heart, words on my lips, which you

may call rash, nay, deem valueless, and yet which rendered life doubly dear, the prospect of escape still more divinely radiant?"

"Your Highness!"

"Hush! I know what you would urge. You think a few hours' acquaintance, ripened by danger into that of years, permits no thoughts, no dreams so potent. And yet your own countenance just now spoke a language, ah! sweet as the heavenly starlight which but now wooed me forth. You, shielded by another and a happier passion—"

She started.

"How knew you that?" she exclaimed with an accession of colour, and a sharp inflection of voice.

"Thus: lighting my dark path by the aid of your lamp, I came cautiously along, skirting, as it seemed, many chambers in my way, until I reached one where the name of 'Catherine,' pronounced in agony of spirit, yet with the softest accents of tenderness, riveted my feet to the ground. The crevices through

which spies have, doubtless, many a time learned unsuspected secrets, that had otherwise remained hidden from human ken, the crevices were wide, though possibly concealed from within. I knew not whom it might be, but veiling the light of my lamp, I glanced within, and saw a young and handsome face convulsed with grief and doubt. Now pacing hurriedly to and fro, now wildly flinging himself into a seat, I watched him at first jealously, then with shame and pity, powerless to stir from the spot, until he grew calmer, and drawing near him paper, though his hand trembled so that he could scarce write, he poured out his soul to yours."

"You saw this? Well?"

"Yes, lady, saw this; and heard from his lips, unobserved, the history of his affection. You love him! He has, with the gloating joy of a miser over his wealth, recapitulated every testimony of your attachment. I stood and heard, and pronounced him worthy even of *you*! So, he hurried from the chamber

and left me free to unmask my light, and guide my steps through the ruinous and forsaken gallery to safety and life. But I stopped; it seemed to me that I had come into the house like a thief, to steal away your confidence, one from the other—to sow discord between ye—to set up, it might be, an ignis fatuus before the eyes, so lately basking in the purest, the most dazzling sunshine."

My grandmother blushed deeply. "And may I inquire why your return should affect me; in what relation it might induce change, or justify reproof?"

Silently he took her hand and pressed it reverently to his lips: "Nay, nay, spare me that tone, I come not to dictate. A mere suppliant, sweetest and brightest creature—I came to ask you to tell him all! Say you will do so, and when this letter comes, confide—"

"It has already come—it is already answered," she replied, coldly. "I have denied your presence; when I did so, I

thought you far beyond the walls. It will never be told now, for I will not brook suspicion, nor answer one injurious thought. And now, if you desire to preserve the life I have wasted so many anxieties, so much manœuvre upon—come! this delay is ruining all—I shall accompany you myself."

"Oh, no! never!"

"Hush! follow me! I will not trust you to go alone, some fresh encounter, perhaps; besides, I can bring back the key, we never thought of that. I shall find means to restore it to Ripley without his being the wiser for its abstraction, or at least the cause. Am I to plead to you, Prince? Come!"

She led the way with the dignity of an empress, though her cheek paled at the gloomy appearance of the vault; he followed silently, and Janet, bearing the lamp, and somewhat reassured by the companionship of the two figures in advance, brought up the rear.

Quickly they traversed the long and winding passage, this time without interruption of

any kind. The Prince indicated the panel through which he had discovered her lover as he passed, but the beauty turned away her head with an impatient gesture, at length they emerged upon the edge of the moat. It was as she had conjectured; the door, whose hinges, rusty with age, creaked and groaned as if they never would unclose, was artfully masked, but doubly so now by time, in the masonry supporting the drawbridge. Leaving Janet to watch the entrance, the lady and the Prince ascended the bank, and found themselves upon the elevation of the bridge, immediately in front of the great gate.

"Where is the key of the wicket?" she said, as both glanced cautiously around to assure themselves they were unobserved. "Now you are in safety—thank Heaven it is so, for, as surely as Ripley is a rascal, he has put those you may not brook to bandy words with upon your track."

They parted in silence, not a word was spoken further, the whispered, "Adieu"

thought you far beyon differ
never be told now, for f
cion, nor answer one nadow, a
now, if you desire She almost
wasted so many a so potent was
upon—come! to her mind; then,
shall accompa, withdrew the key from
"Oh, no! murmuring her thanks to
"Hush! e listened for the faint echo of
to go alo footsteps on the other side.
besides, minute too soon! She was recalled
thoug rself by a shadow falling on the moon-
it to ght which streamed across the portal, a tall
its figure obscured the rays. Looking up she
to encountered her lover; his countenance was
pale as ashes, and his hand already grasped
hers, in which was the key.

"Never!" she exclaimed, raising her arm high above her head, and about to fling the key into the moat.

The movement was arrested by the manly, but heart-stricken voice of her companion.

"Fear not for your key," he said, "retain

to foll[illegible] ·earances,
[illegible] ! with-
[illegible]t carpet [illegible] ithout
[illegible]resence here, at such and
[illegible]afford a less difficult egress. [illegible] et
[illegible] not to follow, but the falsehood is on your conscience, Catherine, the scar is on my soul. I come not to reproach—I come to say, 'we part for ever!'"

o o o o

Five months after this "eventful night" the bells of a great London church were pealing merrily for a wedding. The bridal *cortége*, splendid and numerous, seemed out of place in the midst of grief and mourning, as it passed through streets filled with hearts, aching for the results of foreign warfare, and still tremulous with the fearful scenes of Tower Hill. In these evils almost every one was to a greater or lest degree interested, yet with its easy oblivion of misfortune, the crowd, witnessing the procession, poured forth everywhere its admiring

acclamation until the cavalcade was lost within the entrance of an imposing mansion, in the neighbourhood of St. James's palace.

Scarcely had the bride's foot touched the ground, when she was presented, by a messenger dusty with travel, with a sealed packet, addressed to the heiress under her newly acquired name. She started at the handwriting, and ran rapidly over the contents of the letter, in which was enclosed a ring of gorgeous brilliants. With a radiant smile she placed both in the hands of her husband as soon as they were left alone.

"On the night," she said, lifting towards him the deep tenderness of her lustrous eyes, "on that night, Edward, when, softened by your irrepressible agony, and trembling to find how deeply I was touched by your manly resignation of my plighted hand, I allowed my heart to speak at last; when regretting the solemn vow of secrecy made to myself—a rash vow! but one I formed, knowing and feeling confident in the sincerity I thus de-

sired to test, that night, despite all appearances, I asked you to trust me. Noblest one! without one lingering shade of doubt, without another suspicious allusion, you promised, and you have kept your word. There *was* a secret —I *had* received a visitant, though when I told you I was alone I thought him long departed. There was a place of concealment, a refuge, the knowledge of which, preserved inviolate, might a second time have served to shield the object of my solicitude from death. It was no lover, Edward, but you have doubtless since guessed rightly, whom I opened the gates to save. Ripley's doubts, thanks to your prompt devotion, were easily and fully set at rest, not so your own outraged sense of mutual confidence and truth. How ardently have I looked forward to the time, when I could place the correspondence you have watched of late, with its secret, in your hands. It is come, this letter explains all. Hunted, starved, scarcely retaining life enough to dare escape, now again aided by a

woman's hand, that of Flora, sister of the Mac Donald of Clanronald, then lying hid in dreary caves, or upon rocks beneath the wildest tumult of the elements, Charles Stuart is rescued at last. He landed in Brittany two days since, and by this time is safe in Paris. Edward, it was the brightest dream of my girlhood, the hope to give my hand to one who loved me for myself alone. You thought I had deceived you once, judge how dear was that hour, filled with reproaches and tears; for then I learned it was the woman's heart, not her gold, you sought; that yours was the affection which owes its light, ever fresh and pure, to that lucid fountain of mutual confidence, whose rays, sublimated and immortal, cast by their brightness all wealth and elevated station into shadow."

Such was the tenor of Mr. Seymour's tale, which I have jotted down, as also the others,

from memory. When he had concluded he exclaimed with mocking irony :—

"Now that the prey has fallen, let in the vulture critics!"

"Such an example of manly trust disarms criticism," said Mrs. Fullerton.

"The gentleman was very credulous," broke in her husband.

"He was young," I observed, "and a lover."

"Bravo! Miss Tressingham," exclaimed Mr. Driscoll. "One who speaks so sympathetically must be 'booked' for a thorough series of loves and doves, sonnets and bonnets, hearts and darts, eyes and sighs, et cetera, et cetera."

"Really, sir," said St. Vitus, "you run Cupid's furniture over like an auctioneer's catalogue. Pray, have you a license to sell?

"Or a matrimonial one, 'to be sold!' neither at present, thank you."

"After all," observed the German, dreamily, "there is a good deal of metaphysical truth in the proud, yet loving nature of the lady, and the chivalric confidence of the gentleman."

"Imagination! sir! imagination!" exclaimed the Frenchman sententiously. "I have had experience in the medical profession, and can answer that what a man *wills*, he shall not only believe himself, but"—significantly, and in a lower tone—"he can make others believe also."

"But affairs of the heart are exceptional, are they not?" inquired Mr. Lindsey.

St. Vitus, who had been performing his usual Polar-bear movement about the room, paused somewhat anxiously for the reply.

"Let Monsieur disclose his symptoms, and I will tell him," was the rejoinder.

"A capital hit, by Jove!" laughed Mr. Fullerton. "Let us resolve ourselves into a band of mutual confessors of 'our early loves.'"

"By no means, the topic would be sadly reiterative and monotonous—"

"If the whole world's history were told as to the pranks which Dan Cupid has played in it," added Mr. Seymour.

"And therefore," continued the French doctor, for such we now supposed him to be,

"it is pleasant to find the mind establishing alliance with creations of another sphere."

"I know of nothing of that kind," said young Lindsey, "unless you allude to the promises of fortune-tellers, who always predict that a fellow who gives them half a crown, is to marry an angel."

"Of which there are two kinds," and Mr. Driscoll whisked round upon his toe with a pirouette, to the great disturbance of St. Vitus, who was pacing his usual line of march.

"My friend, I think, means nothing of the sort,"replied the student, "but rather, if I understand him rightly, he thinks with me, that there may be creations by the mind itself, which exercise upon it all the influences of reality."

"Confound me!" said Mr. Fullerton, "if I understand your drift. I remember in my boyish days, having read of some heathen gentlemen who fell in love with a cloud, which I always took for a metaphor of a man being lost in a fog. Children and taxes would

soon take the mythical out of any man's matrimonial existence, I should fancy. What do you say, Mr. Seymour?"

"Possibly. Ours is a practical age, but still science has made some strange revelations, and," he added, laughing, "the evidence of the senses themselves seems to be doubted now. I should like to hear how the opinion can be supported."

"You shall," said the student, "and as it has fallen to my lot to play the spokesman, I will give you an old legend, the truth of which, mind, I do not answer for, as father Herodotus says, but it relates to our subject, and has for its *locus in quo* that portion of the original German territory, or Prussian, according as you distinguish it by race or government, bordering on the wild shores of the Baltic. The place is mystical enough for anything I fancy, and the title of the narrative romantic. I had it from a fellow student at Gottengen, and it is called after its heroine:

CYANE.

A LEGEND OF THE SEA.

THE revelry was at its height Loud voices and louder laughter resounded through the old baronial hall, filling its lofty arches with a confused murmur, which allowed no hush to the whispers of the tutelary echo, silenced in its own domain. A numerous party was assembled round the board, youthful faces, and some of graver age; clustering curls, or scanty locks, which Time had sprinkled with his gentle frost; open foreheads, or the contracted brow of thought, the furrow of care, the sobered gaze of mature experience, were grouped side

by side: one expression pervading all, that of joyous welcome to his ancestral home, of the so long absent and sole-remaining scion of a noble race. Women there were none, though evidences of their vicinity were not wanting in various articles of feminine taste or use, scattered in the ample embrasure of a proximate oriel, and which the light of a lamp, suspended from the vaulted roof, served to reveal. The suppressed sound of the neighbouring ocean was admitted through lattices, thrown open to the breeze on a sultry summer's night; but the air was still heavy with the odour of rich wines, which stood on the polished oaken table and crowned the foaming goblets of the guests. Toasts circulated freely, and many had already been responded to, when the general attention was fixed upon one about to be introduced by a member of the host's immediate circle, occupying the dais, or more elevated portion of the hall. The speaker was a fine muscular specimen of the ancient Teutonic race, and while his ruddy countenance

bespoke a free and careless temperament, his language flowed in plain but manly phraseology, when, after an allusion to his noble entertainer's family, he craved permission to propose the health of its adopted daughter, Hilda Rosenberg. The name was welcomed with a burst of applause, all drank to it with cordiality, many of the younger men with enthusiasm, but, as the host filled a brimming cup, his glance fell for one moment, with penetrating earnestness, upon the countenance of his son, who, the principal object of the evening's festivity, occupied a position near him. The young man's demeanour conveyed a sufficient appearance of interest, and his father's scrutiny was quickly withdrawn, as he replied to a whispered remark from the proposer of the toast, with a pleased and significant smile; but others there were whose observation, also directed to the same quarter, had discerned little beyond a frank concurrence in the sentiment, conclusive to their investigation, as it might be encouraging to their hopes. The dark eyes

of the student had certainly been raised with eagerness as the name of his cousin met his ear; yet, when he lifted his glass, no flush mantled his pale cheek, nor did the next moment find his bearing in aught changed from the somewhat stately and abstracted politeness which had characterised it throughout the evening.

It was in the lull which succeeded the previous acclamation, that a bright but soft flash of summer lightning, glancing through the open window, paled with its unearthly lustre the lights which illuminated the chamber, and whilst in the brief pause which its suddenness occasioned, some were listening in anticipation of ensuing thunder, or others anxiously regarded the darkened sky, there came wafted to the ears of the revellers a strange wild ripple of sweet and distant voices, which thrilled through the hearts of all, and arrested the words upon each lip. No question about the interest of Ernest now! At the first note of that enthralling spell he had risen,

and now stood drinking in, as it were, with rapt attention, each celestial cadence; his very soul absorbed, gazing with eyes fixed in the direction whence the sounds appeared to issue, his lips apart, the hair thrown aside from the bold and massive forehead, its chesnut locks waving in each sudden eddy of the breeze. A moment more, and silence, the stillness of deep astonishment, reigned, the host moved uneasily in his chair; the next, and his voice had broken the charm.

"Close me that lattice, Leo," he cried, in sharp and angry tones, as he observed the inquiring expression of each guest; "close me that lattice, and quick, more wine, our gaiety flags. Why, Ernest, how fares it?" he added, as the youth drew a long breath and fell, as if exhausted, into his seat. "What ails thee, my boy, art ill?"

He had rallied now, and, with an effort, spoke. "What minstrelsy is this, my lord, what land of harmony has been sought for such a chorus of seraphic voices? Of a truth,"

—as his father appeared about to disclaim all knowledge in reply to his question—"my cousin has reason to be proud of her praises, when choristers like these, aid the celebration."

"May we not enjoy the music of your invisible band somewhat nearer?" inquired a handsome man of about five-and-thirty years, whose countenance nevertheless bore the scarred trace of some battle-fields. But his request was answered by the baron's decided declaration that he knew nothing of the serenaders: a confession which excited various speculations upon the romantic singularity of the event, though most of the party appeared inclined to adopt his suggestion, that the music proceeded from the crew of some passing vessel. Baffled, however, in his evident desire to change the subject, he relapsed into a moody silence, and awaited impatiently the introduction of something more suitable to the nature of the festival, whilst Ernest encouraged the conversation now insensibly flowing

into the supernatural, until, with an effort, his father dissolved the spell which seemed gathering over the entertainment. The hall was speedily deserted, and the glitter of lights along another wing in the castle, indicated the passage of the revllers to the more joyous scene of the dance, whose brief intervals were lightly filled up by the whispered flattery of gallants, in the ears of those fair dames, whom desire to do honour to the birthday of the heir, had drawn from the neighbouring domains.

But where was he? For a few moments only he had appeared upon the scene, yet there was one who had marked him enter, and now, with quickened pulse, awaited his approach to claim her hand. How beautiful she was—Hilda Rosenberg! What sunny youth was hers in form and in face, yet those dove-like eyes were deepened now with a shade of disappointment, foreign to their dazzling life; and spiritless and cold she is listening to the admiration of her companion,

the handsome soldier, expressed in no measured terms.

On the terrace, buried in thought, stands Ernest, but he is not alone. By his side an old woman, whose tall figure, slightly bowed by age, and whitened hair, proclaim her the nurse and foster-mother of his infancy, is watching with tender, yet respectful solicitude, as he leans over the balustrade, his eyes fixed on the sand beneath; and old Ursula's hand rests caressingly on the head of him whom she thinks more her child, than the offspring of the stately lady of the mansion, who has invested her with the office of its housekeeper. On a high, massive rock was perched the castle; it had been built many years ago, by an ancestor of its present possessor, who had received it unimpaired by ruin; the hope of a similar transmission of so fair a heritage to a long line of descendants, worthy the noble title it bestowed, constituting the idol wish of his heart. Far below, the waves beat upon

the base of the promontory on which it stood, plashing with a faint and regular intonation upon the white beach of a small cove, just perceptible from above, and appearing in the moonlight like snow. They have been talking of the strange music, and in good truth Ursula could tell to her musing but attentive listener, many a wild legend of its coming, years, years ago, both within and before her time.

"I am an old woman now," she said at length; "yet once only in my life have I heard those sounds, which I never again desire to hear. It was soon after my lord, your grandfather, brought home his second wife; a haughty and a hard woman she was, and bitterly spurned her step-children from her love, which, in their helplessness, they sought to win. My lord's eldest son was just such a one as you are now, my child, his picture hangs in the great hall, and was taken only a year before, when he was the joy and comfort of his widowed father, and we little thought

we should so soon have another mistress. I was a giddy girl then, and gave myself small trouble about what was to come, but many a sad tear did I shed over the harsh words the new baroness bestowed on my lord's children; and poor Fritz, who was then henchman, tried hard to persuade me to leave the castle, and to marry him, and go at once to live by the sea, down yonder in the cove. Well, Fritz's mother was alive at that time, and one night I came down to the cottage (it is all destroyed since), for it was a comfort to cry my eyes out with them, as I thought of the days which used to be at the castle. It was just a month after my lady came, and she and the baron had had a quarrel in the morning about sending Master Eustace to the wars, and then the father and son met, and, poor fellow, he came down to the cove and took the boat, and when Fritz said to him how stormy the night was, he smiled a sad smile, and said, 'Ah, Fritz, my father little cares now what weather I go out in,' and he rowed away, the

waves running mountains. Out the whole night he was, and when the moon was just setting, and I was thinking of getting home quietly, lest my lady should be angry, there came down a message for Master Eustace, and when they found where he had gone, oh, the fright my lord was in! I set off with Fritz along the cliff, and looking over, in hopes of seeing the boat, just as we came to the rock called the 'Trysting Rock,' on a sudden we heard the chant of voices on the sea, and there, in the green waves, which were sinking calmer and calmer, lay the skiff, gently tossing on the tide, whilst all around it were white figures; Fritz called them mermaids, which we could not see plainly for the distance, though we heard them sure enough, for from them the music came; and as we gazed, the moon went down, and we saw the boat in the dim twilight, and Eustace sitting in it alone, and deadly pale. But the worst was to come; for after that time he used to go on the sea, night after night, and then he grew strange

and wild in his talk, and at last, but you know the rest, he became mad. Oh! poor boy, how pitifully he used to talk about a fairy that he said was his betrothed, and how she was to be his wife when he could give up some precious thing that he loved, and throw it into the sea. Sometimes he said the time would come when he should be a murderer, and for his love he must sell his soul; and so he got wilder and wilder, until one evening, when he had been out all day, Fritz found the skiff broken against the rocks, and the body—"

At this moment, the moon, which had been somewhat clouded, suddenly shot forth into the clear sky, and, as Ursula clasped her hands with terror, a second time arose the superhuman music whose tones of wild, yet exquisite tenderness, had surprised the inmates of the hall. Heedless of the fears of his companion, in an attitude of absorbed emotion, Ernest's gaze was riveted on the sea. A boat, or something resembling one,

lay on the waves, and apparently drawn by an irresistible impulse, as the angelic accents swelled upon the breeze, he leaped the boundary of the terrace, and was lost in the precipitous path which led through the overhanging brushwood, along the edge of the cliff towards the beach. Rapidly urging his flight, the thoughts of the young man, as he approached the spot whence the sounds came, assumed a wilder shape: "Thou art pursuing phantoms, spirits," they seemed to say; "thou canst not discern the viewless, thou canst not clasp the immaterial. . . . Yet these tones!" he murmured, "Oh, if such come from spirits, let me, too, breathe with them, the seraphic ether of celestial spheres; listen to, die beneath such feelings—such aspirations of impassioned sweetness, as those which now invoke me onward!"

He speeds faster and faster, one rock alone lies between him and the ocean, he is upon it! The music is nearer—it is close! A star

beams upon him, and he sees clearer. On the extreme point of the cliff stands a vision fair, oh, how passing fair! Pearls gleam in her long dark tresses, pendant bands of coral wreath her white arms, her robe of softest, palest green is bordered with scarlet sea-weed, one small foot is balanced as though about to spring into the wave, the other scarcely touches the verge of her perilous resting place, her hands are tossed over her head, and she sings—when will Ernest forget that angelic voice in its unearthly and glorious intonations?

"She is a spirit!" he cries; "I shall find her only air, but so striving to clasp thee, bright shadow, will I spring into the depths, wherein thy form, all lovely, is reflected!"

He rushes forward; she turns and sees him. The lambent star which crowns her forehead shoots forth an angry gleam, she is going to throw herself into the sea, but he is too quick for her, and now, oh, wonder! his arms clasp

a form, a real form, no shadow, no illusive phantom; palpitating with life and terror, she struggles vainly in his embrace.

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It was late ere the revelries concluded. Bright eyes had grown dim at dawn's approach; soft, clear complexions faded in contrast with the freshness of Aurora's cheek; gallantry exhausted its hackneyed phrase, and Hilda Rosenberg, who had been ill, and had early gone to her apartment, threw open the lattice, to inhale the pure fragrance of the morning breeze. Who steals up the rugged path to the terrace? Surely it is he!

"Ernest!—Ernest!" cried the surprised girl; "where have you been, my cousin? Why did you leave us? My uncle has been inquiring for you. You are wet, you are ill."

He looks up with such a strange, bright smile.

"Good-morrow, fair Hilda," he says

cheerily; "I have been on the rocks asleep, I fancy, since the last hour or so, a foolish prank, but say nothing to my father."

And passing on, he raised his cap, the feather of which had shaded his high, fair forehead, while Hilda watched him climb, with a light and buoyant foot, the steps leading to the gardens, then, with a sigh, closed the window, and was gone. Where has he been, why does he thus reluctantly grant but a few moments to one, who, it is told her by his parents, is so soon to be his wife? Alas! Alas!

What boots the old, sweet tale of hearts lost and won? Evening after evening goes Ernest to the Mermaid's Creek; every hour does he become more madly abandoned to the influence of her spells; suspicion has beset him, but the student, so wise in learned lore, can he not baffle inquiry, and set, by worldly wisdom, the apparent mystery at rest? He goes unquestioned now, they think he is studying, musing, dreaming; he has always

been such a strange youth; his boyhood was more solitary than others, he ever loved reflection and retirement; reveries were his vital nourishment, more than the food he ate. Rare intellect affects such loneliness, they say, yet not the less does his idolising mother, his father, so proud of his only child, mourn over the abstraction, the absence, and Hilda, what thinks she? She has an aid which they possess not in their surmises, a true, unerring guide, and her guesses are nearer the truth.

Some time thus passed, the Baron had at length found words to propose to his son the alliance he had so much at heart, and the result was a decided refusal. Ernest's eyes filled with tears as his father, finding other arguments unavailing, once during their interview alluded to the pale cheek of his cousin, and insinuated a cause which had never before occurred to the young man's heart; but the next minute he almost sternly terminated the conversation, and concluded, alleging no reason, with the words, "The

hour this union is mentioned, you lose your son!'

In the evening of that day, so calmly bright and beautiful, he is unfastening his boat, and rowing out to sea; there is no wind, and the sail is useless but his arm is strong, and soon a green island is before him, the boat is moored to its marble base, and he springs on the turf enamelled with flowers to meet—that *other!*

They sit together, no land in sight! The light clouds sleep upon the tide, and the sun, ardent, yet with softened ray, rests like a jewel on the bosom of the western wave. Gradually, the watery mirror becomes resplendent with a thousand fires; the boundary betwixt heaven and ocean fades in the pale yet gorgeous hues of the horizon; the mantle of the night creeps onward stealthily, until the blue expanse spangled with stars above, the darker blue reflecting them beneath, mingle, and form one vast concave, in which they seem—those two beings—sus-

pended! The hours pass on, and still they move not, but with a fond entrancement look into each other's eyes with glances which are mortal and immortal too; he holds her hand in his, her head is on his shoulder; the talk —what is it? Listen!

He is persuading her to leave her ocean home, its palaces of crystal and gold, her sisters, so bright and beautiful, and fond, her sports, her joys, her innocent smiling existence, for the world's tangled path of thorns, but a path shared with—him.

"Cyané!" and his words come choked and broken with overwhelming, thrilling anxiety, "Cyané! why these scruples, these doubts? Can you not believe, can you not confide in me? Were those conditions a thousand times more difficult, they should be strictly observed. Oh, Cyané! when they spoke to me of another bride, how beat my heart—how throbbed my pulses; thine—thine ever—only!"

His utterance is stopped, his eyes are raining tears; she listens, and her own fill with

bright drops; he raises his head, and looks at her—he sees he has conquered!

"Why fades the star upon thy brow, my own?"

And whilst he speaks—amazement! it is extinguished! As the music of the sea-shell, faint and low, fell the accents of Cyané upon her impassioned lover.

"Knowest thou not," she said, a sad, sweet smile irradiating her soft cheek, "why the star is fading? A brighter, oh, my beloved! is rising in my breast, the star of woman's tenderness; but I lose the visible type of my fairy birth, when I resign my heart to a human passion, myself to an earthly home!"

And so the moon looked down upon these two, the sea-born Psyche, the almost celestial Eros! And in the silent midnight hour was registered the vow which bound Cyané to her mortal lord!

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The scene is shifted! Not the mysterious

depths of ocean, concealing caves of coral, and gem-bright halls, lit by many a star-reflecting stalactite, are before us now: Nature is still present, but Art leads her majestic steps, and crowns her with diadems wrought by his own wondrous fingers.

The sun is setting upon Italy; the dazzling cerulean of the heavens, tinged with crimson fire, casts an effulgent glow upon the marble domes of stately Florence, and touches with rosy lustre the statues of her gardens, investing them with an almost life-like beauty. Groups are hurrying to and fro; music, and song, and gay bursts of laughter are borne commingled on the breeze. There is a festival to-night, and each palazzo has sent forth its inmates to swell the crowd of youth and beauty, dancing on the velvet lawn, beneath the shade of those magnificent citrons. Pavilions rise in all directions, festooned with garlands of flowers; upon seats, or lying on the sward, are knots of people, singing to the light accompaniment of a solitary guitar,

watching the distant dancers, or in desultory and jesting converse, pacing slowly backwards and forwards; anon a graver circle is riveted by some subject of animation and interest. The twilight advances, yet there is no relaxtion of gaiety; refreshments are handed about, cool drinks proffered to the thirsty lips of the Terpsichorean votaries, the older portion of the party seating themselves at the heaped supper-tables. What place can the thoughtful Ernest find in this wild chaos of frivolity? Yet he is here; and look! who leans upon his arm? It is his wife, the peerless, the envied, the meteor so lately risen upon Florence, whose influence no heart disowns.

Three years have rolled swiftly by, and in the deep adoration of his inmost soul, the eyes of Ernest, fraught with all the pride and devotion of his nature, tell that the husband is the lover still. The focus of attraction, the goddess to whom bow the hosts of men, and women too, striving to arrest one glance of those soft unfathomable orbs, so eloquent in

their buoyant fascination; she smiles! and rank, wealth, intellect, flock to her side; she sings! and the dance is forsaken, the hum of voices is mute, the deep-drawn breathings of her audience when she ceases, tell how thrilling, how entrancing is her spell!

There is one, however, who inquires her name; he is a stranger just come from Pomerania, and stands transfixed with admiration, as, rising from the harp, whose chords her white hands have just quitted, she looks around. Ernest is at her side, and together they pass through the silent crowd into the gardens. The folds of her dress almost touch the soldier as she glides by. He changes colour; It is he says, "Ernest Von Reichtenfel, and can that be his wife?" He is told she is, that, pure as beautiful, the glory of Florence, the idol of her husband, she is unmindful of aught but his praises; her eyes ever seek his, that, though flattery, power, devotion, are stirred towards her in each

breast, she remains insensible to them all. Yes, she is his wife! The soldier was astonished; he had been told by Hilda Rosenberg, on the evening of the fête at Reichtenfel Castle, that her heart was no longer in her own keeping, had pressed to know his rival, and her blushes had not contradicted him when he named her cousin. Since that time he had gone away, and when he heard that Ernest had married, and was again a wanderer from his home, he had sighed over the memory of his love-dream, for who but Hilda could be the bride? "I must hear more of this," he thought; and following in the direction taken by the pair, was accompanied by the Italian nobleman who had already answered his question.

"You know nothing further of them, then?" he asked, as, after strolling together for some time, the conversation paused.

"No," replied his companion; "but now I think of it, my friend Rudolfi, who has just

come from the Greek Isles, may perhaps satisfy your curiosity. I heard him say he had met them there."

Rudolfi was soon found, and after an introduction to the soldier, began, at his request, to give him the desired information.

"All I know about them," he said, "is, that the beauty of this modern Circe was to some as pernicious as that of her fabled prototype. Stories have been told of those who, in the frenzy of despairing love, have even sacrificed their lives. But just before I quitted Greece, a strange event occurred, which made us all suspect that some mystery surrounded her which we could not penetrate. They had a child, a boy, inheriting his mother's witching beauty; he was ever in her arms, while she sang to him on the rocks at night, her husband seated by, or reclining in a boat, the child sleeping at her side, beneath the shadowy shore at noonday. A twelvemonth had the boy's existence thus sped on, when he died; a funeral took

place, and he was buried—so, at least, we all supposed—but after a while it was whispered that the coffin had contained no body, that the parents had never even visited the grave. They abruptly left the place; and here she is, a few months after, radiant with loveliness and animation, though there is little doubt she and her husband know more of the death and disappearance of the infant, than they pretend. That he was the murderer of his child is more than probable, though how the body was disposed of, is to this hour a mystery."

A deep sigh is at this moment heard, and, fearful of observation, the man who has asserted such barbarous deeds of a father, hurries his companion away. There is a thick hedge of myrtles behind the stone bench where they have been sitting, and it shelters a small enclosure, where another pair are reposing, if these words have not blasted the repose.

"You hear," and the syllables come with bitter emphasis—"You hear, Cyané,

they brand me the murderer of my child! Oh! was it not enough to lose him, so young, so innocent, so lovely, to see the abhorred waters of the dark Ægean close over his fair head, and to know that the foul deed must still be wrought upon each blessed bud of promise which Heaven bestows upon us! Was it not enough to know that down to the grave I must go, childless, bereaved, to satisfy the accursed laws which permit only in consummating so dread a sacrifice, your race to mix with mortals? But must I hear such words as these; be taunted with a death I would have given my own life to avert, the death even of my first-born?"

Cyané spoke not. She was, if possible, more beautiful than when, in the lone midnight hour she had pledged her heart to him before her, but a cloud, which ever and anon had come over her countenance, a cloud, softer, but yet like to that her husband so often wore, had shed its melancholy over the exquisite features, though it might be enhanc-

ing their beauty. Poor child! Taken from thy home of careless happiness, soon hast thou learned the penalties of this inferior state, which thou hast made thine own; the verdant flowers which thy youth loved and wandered amongst, earth's bosom bears not! Care is life's fruit, indigenous, and Thought, the denizen of happier climes, weaves not his fairy wreaths, fresh from Imagination's bowers of hope and joy, but with worn front and toiling agony, shapes out a devious coil of policy and craft, spending the hours in search of antidotes for grief and woe, the poison-berries of man's life! But take courage, Cyané, he loves thee deeply, devotedly. Does he think, dull-sighted man, that thy grief did not equal his, when thine infant, the light of thy second life, was taken from thee? Did he never guess the mortal tears thou hast been shedding night after night in thy solitude, while he has been striving to kill memory by seeking company and pleasure? Is there no anguish for the mother?

She is deeply moved—her heart misgives her. Will his constancy be proof against another deprivation, or will he learn to love her less, in deeming her the sad occasion of his woes? There is madness in the thought! Oh, no! She told him all; she hesitated long before she would consent to link her fate with his, but she feels for him, she knows what he endures, and she strives to win him gently back to her love, once his all. Kneeling by his side, she has drawn his head upon her bosom, and now those soft limpid accents are breathing on his senses, calming the troubled whirlpool within, and leading him again to hope—to life—to love.

"My own!" she whispers, "thou knowest our little one is safe, ay, safer than ourselves who cling so close together! In my slumbers I have seen him; nursed in the ocean palace of my sire, he has joys which this cold earth can never dream of, powers, which, possessed by its frail habitants, would make them wild with ecstacy. I saw my sisters rise

and receive him in their arms, as he softly sunk to his mother's home. Alas, alas! that it is forbidden me to lead thee to him, and oh, more! myself to re-enter my native element, so long as linked to an earthly passion. Thou canst still choose. Say, Ernest! shall I quit thee, and spare another sacrifice? I may even now return to my home, but if I leave thee, oh, my husband, never mayst thou look upon Cyané more. Ah, speak! Shall it be? Wilt thou have it so?"

For all answer he takes her to his bosom, and presses his lips to her soft brow. His love is strong again within him, and calmly, his arm encircling her slight form, he talks of the future, its doubts, its difficulties, its fears.

"We must depart," he said at length, "once more leave this our resting-place, wherein suspicion lurks, and fly to some fair spot, where, unknown, these evidences of mystery and apparent guilt may not pursue us." Whilst he yet spoke, the German ap-

proached him; they met frankly, but the soldier had heard a tale of the baron, which repeated drew the life from the bosom of his hearer. His parents, they are growing old, and he must once more see them, for they pine for him. He told Cyané this, why could they not leave at once? Every instant of delay racked him with torture; it was settled they should go.

Travelling together through long days and longer nights, with no companion but that soft and loving heart, it was natural that Ernest should recover his tranquillity, and that Cyané should resume her place in his affection. She had nothing to complain of, he never spoke of the lost boy, and was so affectionate, so ardent, so impassioned, that she summoned courage to tell him all her hopes and fears, and breathe the spirit of old into his ear.

They had stopped at a little village within a few miles of the castle. Quick travelling, and exciting conversation, had made Cyané

ill. She reclined in her husband's arms, her cheek resting on his breast—its marble hue ever and anon crossed by the crimson flush of pain, which she strove, and not ineffectually, to hide from his observation. Poor girl, poor child; the world—the earth again!

So near the castle, Ernest could not bear to delay his promised meeting with his parents, and this desire his wife strengthened, though she parted from him with bitter tears. A fond embrace—a kiss—an instant more, and he is gone. Heaven speed him!

The next morning Cyané was again a mother. Her child, a girl, was in her arms, and she awaited with impatience his return, when he should clasp its tiny form to his heart. What has been his reception at the Castle? What should be the welcome to the son so dearly loved? They have not reproached his absence, they only fix the tearful gaze of pride and affection upon his manly figure, and long already to greet that fair young wife, whom he is so vividly portraying.

Well for you, Hilda Rosenberg, that you are away! Those two aged and cherished hearts, whom it is your sole happiness to play the daughter to, seem to think of none but their son's bride, and the father, how anxious he is for an heir to be born to the wide lands around! He speculates whether it will be a boy or a girl: "I may not go down to the grave in peace till I hold one or the other to this old breast!" If it be a daughter, the grandsire talks cheerily of her preserving the family name; if it should be a boy, but that would be better still . . . .

He has returned, and Cyané, palpitating with joy, resigns him from her embrace, watching with intense, but unobserved emotion, the first meeting of Ernest with his daughter.

Oh, if the lost boy were dear, how much more closely knit in fondness to his soul, did the tiny image of Cyané seem, which Ernest now gazed upon! The same brow, the same translucent cheek, the mystic depth of tender-

ness in the dark-fringed eyes, the round and delicately moulded limbs, how exact in beauty was the living copy of yonder pallid form. A new, strange, rapture thrilled through the father's frame, nor could a deeply scrutinising eye discover any alloy from the woful anticipation of coming time, when the babe shall be placed by hands which love her best, in the bosom of that ocean whose offspring she so truly is.

When first—long years ago—the Nymphs of the deep received the vows of the sons of the earth, the unhappy Mermaid, earliest transgressor of her native laws, who dared to love a mortal, was no other than the daughter of the monarch himself, a Princess beloved by every subject of her father's realm. For some time she was imprisoned in a crystal cave, far in the depths of the broad Atlantic, but her lover proving faithful, she was finally permitted to rejoin him, on condition that each successive child of their union should be consigned to ocean spirits, never again to

touch that earth whereon it first drew breath. Subsequently a law was ordained, that this punishment alone should be affixed to similar offences, the pains and penalties of the terrestrial nature, which the rebellious nymph adopted, being deemed equivalent to her error; yet to prevent intermixture of the two races, a solemn oath was exacted on both sides, subject to inviolable secresy, that every infant, the day it was a twelvemonth old, should be committed to the waves, and thus restored to the element which obliterated its mortal taint. The punishment of disobedience was too dreadful to be contemplated, and no case of infringement of the conditions had ever called for its infliction; Cyané shuddered when, in answer to her lover's question, she once momentarily alluded to it. For one year, therefore, were the parents permitted to enjoy their children's presence, and the refinement of torture which this boon entailed was, perhaps, the reason why nymphs, who had so often watched from their coral homes the agonies of

some erring sister, at parting with the babe, endeared by twelve happy months of habitual and loving companionship, dreaded, as an awful augury of ill, the approach of a son of earth; carefully guarding their ears from the smooth-tongued treachery of those whom they considered the hereditary enemies of their race. Yet if Cyané remembered all this, Ernest appeared to have forgotten every future fear in the transport with which he hung over the little Alma, each day augmenting the devotion he displayed, though his affection for his wife was even increased by the presence of this fresh object of their mutual care.

At the castle, Cyané was but seldom a visitant, for Ernest preferred the privacy of a rocky eyrie a few miles distant, which he had delighted in fitting up with the most costly elegance for her, to actual residence with the baron; but the infant was daily carried thither, and when Cyané herself appeared, it was difficult to discern which shared most the fondness lavished on both, by the parents

of her husband. One alone of the household regarded her with feelings of distrust, for circumstances had revealed to Ursula some portion of the mysterious history connected with the marriage of her foster son, and her surmises were confirmed by a sudden change in Ernest, which to her keen recognition, appeared to bode no good. As the child neared the anniversary of its birth, the father's abstraction increased; long days were spent in solitude upon the beach, or in his boat; gazing at the heavens and waves alternately, he would murmur strangely to himself; sometimes shutting himself up with the child, who never tired of crowing and smiling in his arms, to the exclusion even of the companionship of Cyané. After a time the aged domestic found courage to speak to her young master; the interview was long, at its conclusion, Ursula appeared to have imbibed a portion of that melancholy spirit, which it had been her end to dissipate, but after this they often talked together, and Cyané, whose

thoughts were ever upon the parting with her child, rejoiced once more to find her husband often at her side, not only stedfast in his seeming resolution to face the coming trial, but awake to a perception of the equal grief which she endured, as the sad hour approached.

The day is come; the soft breeze of an autumn morning breathes from the sea upon her forehead, and makes music in the tall trees which form the background of her mountain home. The waves dance in the bright sunshine, but Cyané turns away with a sickened heart, her tears fall fast, her white hands are clasped together on her knee, and she looks fixedly towards the horizon. A dark speck is faintly seen upon the waters, it disappears while yet she gazes; what means this wild agony of tenderness? She knows that that barque contains *two* beings, as it pursues its trackless way, she knows that when it meets her gaze again, there will then be but *one*! All the day she sits, straining her eyes upon the distant main. Towards evening he re-

turns; the traces of tears are on his cheek, his eyes are haggard, his voice trembles, he tells her it is done! Forth again in the shadowy evening, not by her side to comfort, to assuage, with a strange wild gleam of mysterious triumph dancing in his eye, yet with a dim and vague fear guiding his every action, what can it be?—is he mad?

For some time after his abrupt departure, Cyané remained where he had quitted her, her thoughts vainly striving to interrogate the mystery. Suddenly thunder is heard, it shakes the walls of her bower; a flash of lightning succeeds, so intense that it blinds the eyes of the affrighted one, standing in her solitary helplessness beneath its furious fervour. What sounds does she hear? Yes! they are the voices of the sea, but not, as of yore, lulling the soul with the softest cadence, menacing and angry they shout one to another, and the burden of all, borne in wild throes of unearthly strife, is ever, "Cyané! Cyané! disobedient, where is thy child?"

She sees it all now, and a shriek of more than human agony bursts from her pale lips. She knows if restitution does not take place before yon moon, now rising in the portentous sky, has set, that the penalty is, death. Death—to whom?—not to herself—oh, no! that would be happiness compared, nor yet is *he* to form the expiation. She seems to behold her infant's limbs convulsed with the pangs of departing life; she sees it scathed and blasted—its eyes closed—its cheek pale—the crimson tide fast ebbing!

The voices are nearer—on the rising wave, whose surges every moment swell, ride forms which come sighing, sighing, in melancholy tones, "Haste thee, Cyané!—haste thee, or thy child is lost!" Quick as thought she unclasps the zone from her waist—she flings it on the sea—another moment! the waves are stilled, the tempest is hushed, and before her floats a nautilus shell, with its lining of pearly satin, sweeping its filmy sails in the breeze, as she consigns herself to its guidance. Softly

skims the frail vessel along the shore, the castle is passed, and now it looms high in the distance, but the fairy barque glides beneath the crags, entering a rocky creek a mile or two beyond, one step, and she has sprung upon the sands. Scarcely do her feet touch the path in her rapid ascent, a tower rises, a voice singing a lullaby, see! an old woman with white hair and kind eyes, hushing a baby to sleep—"Alma! Alma! my child, my child."

Down the rocks and over the sands flies Cyané, the infant clasped to her breast! Oh, how much better to resign it to the fond care of those yonder in the wave, than to see it death-stricken upon this sad earth! She will obey, she only fears the moon may set before the child is safe within its watery home, and now, awakened by the rapid step of its mother, its little voice is heard in piteous accents. Faster! faster, Cyané, it is pleading for its life!

A grasp is on her arm — words!—oh,

Heaven! the first harsh tones he ever breathed to her, are hissing in her ears; bitterly showers he reproaches on the unnatural mother, madly he upbraids and spares not. She is subdued now—her strength is gone—her limbs are powerless—she has no heart to answer his taunts, to deprecate his anger, the hours are passing, the moon is going down—what shall be the end of this?

The veil is rent from her eyes, the dream has fled. Another mortal passion has come between his soul and hers, it will, it *has* overmastered his love for her. She can save the infant, she can secure to him the possession of this treasure which he holds dearer than the whole world besides—than herself! She remembers it all, her tears cease to flow, a smile of sadness flits over her face, she has sat down at his side, and is speaking lowly and rapidly.

"Ernest, spare me these reproaches! Why did you deceive me? believe my agony is great enough, but the child is safe. I will

protect it, myself shall be the substitute, and now, my beloved, listen! A few moments more, and yon descending moon will have reached the bosom of the deep, and sunk in its waves. When it disappears, Cyané will no longer claim a single look or thought! All, all will be hers," she embraced the infant impetuously as she spoke—"yet, sometimes, my husband, in the twilight, or beneath the moon's calm ray, come to the island of our tryst, where, though invisible, I may gaze upon the face of this fair infant and of thee."

Her voice is inarticulate, he does not understand her meaning; winding her arms around his neck, she fondly showers kisses upon his head and brow: is it a dream?

A flash of light illuminates the air, whence comes it? Looking up he sees her standing upon the green surface of the unrippled deep; her eyes are raised above, her lips are parted, the hue of mortal pain is over, she is all spiritual; the star, the star, burns on her brow again!

A soft sound, as of sighing voices, "Cyané, Cyané! welcome back, peerless one, thou hast conquered." Fairy shapes people the pellucid depths suddenly revealed, he covers his face from the bright glances of another world, he hears the sound of rushing waters, then all is silence.

It is past, Ernest is alone; pale and agitated he sits on the shore of the infinite, the sleeping child pressed convulsively to his heart. Alma! Alma!

That the speaker had carried his point as to the influence of the mind's creations upon itself, was proved by the thoughtful silence of the whole party, when he concluded. Each was busily weaving fancies, even less substantial perhaps than the ideal the narrator had introduced, and at present

> "——was pervaded by a haunting spirit,"
> That spirit, beauty."

Mr. Driscoll observed: "Whether legend-

ary or not, your story would make a capital scenic hit upon the stage. Fancy Grieve and Telbin exercising their talents in representing the lovers on their island, that island appearing suspended between heaven and earth—"

"Like Mahomet's coffin," said Mr. Fullerton.

A general cry of "Shame!" greeted this profanation of the image.

"Well, all I mean, is to 'waken you from your dreams of high romance,' and make you find yourselves once more 'amid the common air.'"

"It must not be in such a night as this, then," said Mr. Seymour, as, at the moment, a gust of unusual violence seemed to shake our mountain strong-hold to its centre.

We ladies drew closer to the fire, upon which young Lindsey was piling more wood.

"I shall really be afraid to go to bed tonight," said Mrs. Fullerton, "especially after that story."

"If I alarm, madam, I am truly sorry," said the young German; "but Cyané was at least a beneficent sprite."

"Pshaw! let us dispel such fancies. Then, as it's your turn, Driscoll, see what you can do to enliven the company. First of all, kindly pass me the brandy."

"I, yes; but I'm half asleep."

"Well, my good fellow, except you turn us all out, I don't know how you're to get a nap, seeing that this is your lodging for the night. The ladies seem disinclined to move, so you had better rouse yourself and begin."

"That can be no matter of difficulty," said I, "to a man of Mr. Driscoll's acquaintance with real life."

"Which in most barristers is anything but 'still life.' But what shall it be?"

"Something appropriate, of course," said Mr. Seymour. "What do you say to some reminiscence of Chamber Practice? You need not tell us the names of parties, but Chancery Lane, Lincoln's Inn, and the Temple, are

thorough confessionals of family jars, widows' confidences, erratic younger sons—"

"Stay a moment. Widows' confidences, a good idea. If I yawn, forgive me, ladies; but I will try to follow Mr. Seymour's suggestion. I happened once, as a man about town, to hear a curious account, both concerning a widow, aye! and chambers, too. It was a romance of real life, and you will all believe it practical enough when I tell you that it grew out of neither more nor less than a little bit of paper stuck up in a window, upon which was written that wonderfully mysterious announcement:

"APARTMENTS TO LET."

NEVER do I see this announcement exposed in a window, without thinking of the words of a dear old lady, who patronised extensively my childhood, and always termed these little printed cards and papers, "signals of distress." The feeling which dictated the remark will find an echo in the mind, which even casually inquires into half the causes leading to this simple proffer of equivocal hospitality. For myself, though anything but ambitious of undertaking a crusade against popular opinion upon this

point, I am far more inclined to pity the "lone woman," whom misfortune has condemned to open her doors to all the world, and to forego her own ideas of happiness domestic, in favour of those Fate may quarter upon her, than to picture the once fashionable mansion, with its air of faded gentility, its worn crimson, or darned muslin window-curtains, and slip-shod maid of all work, as presided over by the conventional "landlady;" a sort of household harpy, ubiquitous as "an Irishman or a bird" —eh, Miss Fullerton?—with the eyes of Argus, a quick, sharp voice, marvellously versatile towards the supple, or the shrill tone, a dingy cap, and a bunch of duplicate keys in her pocket.

Walking down a respectable though not fashionable neighbourhood, a hanger-on upon gentility rather than its votary, I was attracted one spring evening, to the appearance of cards in a house standing alone in a well built street, of a decidedly private appearance, and upon which this identical little domicile

was, in that respect, the only blot and disgrace. The circumstance of the "Apartments," might not itself have excited attention, had it not been for the air of *propreté* and superiority otherwise characterising the premises. Every building in the street was more or less *soigné*, but this one possessed even an added aspect of refinement, difficult to reconcile with pasteboard existences. There were evergreens in the verandah, snowy draperies of Indian texture half veiled the windows, and peering through the first-floor bay, for a glance into the interior, you caught sight of a little ormolu table, upon which a pot of fresh mignionette was placed, apparently for the delectation of a superb green parrot, whose cage hung immediately above.

I confess—perhaps partly because I had an eye to lodgings myself at the time—I confess to becoming suddenly interested in all this unpretending, yet tempting domesticity. The well-to-do air of refinement was so completely at variance with the fatal placard in

the windows, that I found a degree of romance and even mystery, gradually investing the subject.

An idea was indeed fast taking possession of me, that so far from its being a matter of indefinite realization, the changing my abode, I was in immediate want of "Apartments." I began to feel persuaded it was a matter of vital importance that I should discover everything connected with this attractive dwelling; if there were any garden at the back; who were the owners—a young couple? an elderly pair with grown up daughters? a divorced French republican, with engagements at a boarding-school? or a solitary unit of the fair sex? The idea of the house belonging to a bachelor, was out of the question, even without the evidence of the parrot, for how could a cigar profane such a sanctum? Whether there were any lodgers there already, and several other equally important queries, occurred to me, none of which I had the smallest right in the world to attempt elucidating.

Just as I turned to re-pass the house, a cab clattered up the street, and stopped in front of the object of my cogitations. Somebody dismounted, and ran rapidly up the steps whose snowy whiteness I had already so much admired. The cab was loaded with luggage, and as I slowly approached the spot, I trembled for the neatness and order of the establishment, upon observing decided indications of a male visitor. Portmanteaux, dispatch-cases, and hat-boxes were there, but nothing to imply the advent of that softer sex, of whom, taking advantage of Pope, I may say,

> "Ladies like variegated tulips show,
> 'Tis to their *changes* half their charms they owe."

(Mrs. Fullerton, I really must come under your wing. Your daughter is trying to intimidate me!) Well, to return.

The survey of the rooms had been accomplished with railway celerity. A man's voice was already audible at the half-opened door, and the following short dialogue ensued:

"I will take all four rooms, remember. Not that I shall use them, but I hate interruption. Tell your people so, d'ye hear?"

"And what name, sir, please?" was responded by the maid-servant, who spoke with a strong provincial accent, "what name, sir, shall I say to missis, when she comes in?"

He was apparently inspecting the transport of his luggage into the house, and she followed him down to the little gate.

"What name? Oh! ah! Well, what is your mistress's name? I suppose she has one?"

"Mrs. Langton, sir."

"Well, then I'm Mr. Langton. Give me the latch key; shut up the house as usual. Nobody need wait up for me," and in less time than I take to relate it, the eccentric lodger had apparently seen all his goods safely deposited within his new abode, and jumping into the lightened vehicle, was borne down the street, while a glimpse of his manly and handsome

exterior evidently gave fresh objects of distraction to the bewildered maid-of-all-work.

Professional casualty furnished me, strange to say, with the subsequent history of the "Apartments" and their inmate. I became not only acquainted with Mrs. Langton herself, but with the issue of what turned out to have been her first attempt at letting lodgings, a fact which the general appearance of her abode very clearly indicated.

The story is briefly—ah! Miss Jeannette, laughing again—as follows:

Number Fourteen, Mandeville Street, was *not* shut up when the lodger returned, somewhere between the hours of twelve and one, on the night in question and succeeding morning. He let himself quietly in; a light was burning in the little lantern which hung in the hall, and after possessing himself of the bedroom candlestick which was upon the table awaiting him, he went straight up to his own sleeping apartment and soon con-

signed himself to repose. Not, however, before a stealthy footstep had come up the staircase and past his door, to the upper regions.

"Ha! been to lock up the street door I suppose," mentally soliloquised the new comer, as he settled himself luxuriously in the embrace of an excellent feather bed, "perhaps afraid of a latch key; must get them out of that nonsense to-morrow. Humph! a silk dress as I live. I can hear it rustle; not the servant-maid, the way she walks has soon told me that. Ah! now she's gone into the room overhead; Mrs. Langton, of course, my landlady herself, in *propriâ personâ*. And yet she has not the step of a lodging-house keeper, though I don't know much about such people, thank Heaven!" and proud even upon his pillow, the lodger fell asleep to dream that he was in pursuit of a phantom in ribbons, through a series of hotels and private apartments, whose sleepers started up in endless

variety, until finally he got the nightmare in the shape of an immense turtle with something, in the face and double chin, of an ugly old woman, who dressed in a greasy blue silk and holding a latch key, was, he imagined, sitting astride upon his stomach and declaiming upon the peccadilloes of her servants.

Number Fourteen, Mandeville Street was not a large house, it contained only two rooms on each floor, the front of course the larger and better, the ones behind smaller, and fitted up on both floors as sleeping apartments. Upstairs the two communicated after the fashion of ordinary drawing-room stories, and while Mrs. Langton's inmate occupied the back room, his goods and chattels awaited his arrangement in the front, which he destined for his own particular sanctum.

"Will ye be pleased to have the breakfast laid up stairs or down?" was the query when the boots and hot water arrived in the morning.

"Oh! down stairs to be sure. Here, I say, what's-your-name, come back, I want to speak to you."

"My name's Bridget, sir; I be a Somersetshire girl."

"Well then, Bridget," said the new lodger, smiling, "see if you can get me to-day's *Times*, and let breakfast be ready in half an hour. Coffee and eggs, that's all."

He had given her a sovereign; she stood vacantly looking at it.

"Please, sir, what's I to do with this?"

"Pay for the paper, and anything else that is wanted," he said, rather pettishly.

And the door was shut just as Bridget exploded into a suppressed "guffaw," at the top of the stairs.

"And he give I a sovereign to fetch a paper with! Well, he be made o' money, he be, sure enough. And what a handsome, outspoken gentleman! Missis seems very uneasy —like to know his name, and I'll find it out for her afore I'm many hours older, but I'm

bound he's a real gentleman, and no mistake."

And with this profound reflection, Bridget marched down stairs to obey the behest of the stranger.

At the appointed time breakfast was ready in the cosy little dining-room. The tiny table, the mignionette, and parrot, had all three been removed, but there was a vase of fresh flowers upon the breakfast cloth, and among the preparations for his repast, were hot rolls, and a small glass dish of irreproachable Scotch marmalade.

He looked round with a sense of gratified ownership. Everything within the house bore the same impress as the exterior, simple, unpretending, yet with an exquisite nameless refinement.

"It will not be so bad, after all," he said, as he sat down to his coffee and the *Times*, "but I wonder what my feminine namesake is like?"

The "gentleman's" real appellation con-

tinued a mystery, in spite of Bridget's zeal to discover it. On investigation it turned out that neither portmanteau, desk, books, nor linen, offered any clue beyond the initials, "F. L.," everything bearing more, seemed to have been purposely abstracted. There was no resource, therefore, but to address him as he had desired, and the stranger became Mr. Langtón very much to his landlady's annoyance, who, could she have "screwed her courage to the sticking-place," would have lost no time in expostulating with him upon the extraordinary line of conduct he had thought fit to adopt. Between herself and Bridget, he was always spoken of as the "gentleman," but at the end of three weeks, chance, and the quickness of Bridget's ears elucidated what the "F." represented, however veiled in obscurity the "L." might remain.

The "gentleman" was very simple in his requirements, and gave but little trouble. He spent the morning generally in the room ad-

joining his bedchamber, going to and fro through the folding doors between that and the drawing-room, the entrance on the staircase being kept locked. He went out usually about dusk, to dinner, it was supposed, since he was never known to order that meal at home, and came back at hours varying between nine and twelve, never later.

At the end of the first week, the "gentleman's" bill came in. It was written in a flowing feminine hand, and the calligraphy caused him to look inquiringly up at Bridget, as she stood gazing open-mouthed at the handful of gold he had drawn from his waistcoat pocket, to liquidate the demand.

"Why don't your mistress come herself and take the money? I've never seen her since I came into the house."

But Bridget made no reply to the query, going out of the room, and bringing back the "gentleman's" change, together with the receipted bill, which she laid down beside him.

He was tossing the latter aside, when the name at the foot of it, once more aroused his curiosity.

"Gertrude Langton!"

"Yes, please, sir; that's Missis."

"And is there no *Mr.* Langton?" the "gentleman" went on with a half smile, for his desire to be so addressed, had frequently given occasion to a desperate fit of mirth on the girl's part, who had more than once professed:—

"I never shall be able to call 'ee that, sir, please, it do make I laugh so."

He repeated his question as she hesitated.

"Is there any Mr. Langton, Bridget?"

"No, sir; missis be a widdy.

"And how long is it since her husband died?" he continued, with the idea of elucidating something like data connected with the age of his unseen hostess. "Was he an old man?"

"I believe as how he wor, sir, but I don't

rightly know, for it was afore I comed to London."

And so the conversation dropped.

One day coming home earlier than usual, the "gentleman" caught the sound of a piano. It came from the lower portion of the house, that which Mrs. Langton generally inhabited. The instrument seemed a good one, but the tones ceased immediately upon his step being heard. The "gentleman" was more than half inclined to invent some excuse and invade his landlady's privacy, just to see what she was like, but a sudden fit of bashfulness seized him, and he went upstairs to his study instead.

Thus time went on, until, as we have said, three entire weeks had elapsed. On the evening when the third bill in Mrs. Langton's neat handwriting had made its appearance, the lodger received a call from a friend, with whom he was closeted a considerable time in the aforesaid studio, to the keyhole of which

Bridget—after the mode immemorial of inquiring domestics—meanwhile diligently applied her ear. She was nearly being discovered, too, for the conference finished a little before the time she expected, and both gentlemen came quickly out upon the staircase, before she had time to retreat.

"What had she been doing there? What did she want? Had she been listening?" The three questions poured forth so suddenly and fiercely, that the culprit trembled for a moment: not longer. Bridget was, though a country girl, as inventive as any Londoner in the way of excuses. She recovered herself immediately, dropped a curtsey, infused a yet more inane expression than that habitual to it, into her countenance, and had only come to know if the "gentleman" would require anything for the next half hour, as she was going to meet a lady at the train, who was coming to spend a week with Mrs. Langton.

"Listened! heard anything! yes!" she exclaimed, as she ran downstairs, and tied her

bonnet on in the kitchen; "I've found out one on yer names, young squire. Fit—Fit—ay, Fitzroy—that's it! 'Good night, Fitzroy,' he said."

And from that hour the stranger became Mr. Fitzroy throughout the house.

The next day was Sunday. Contrary to his usual custom, the lodger went out early, intending not to return until late. He forgot something, however, and came back to fetch it about five o'clock, letting himself in quietly, and going straight up to his room. He was there but a few minutes, and, having found the forgotten article, was descending the staircase, when he was startled by the apparition of a lady coming up. He moved back with his usual polite bearing, to permit her to pass, and thus had a good opportunity of observing her.

A tall, slight girl, of apparently little more than eighteen, with a pale, earnest cast of countenance, and chestnut hair of uncommon length and luxuriance. He was enabled to

judge of this last as she had only just taken off her bonnet, which she carried on her arm, and the tresses had slipped from their confinement on one side, escaping to her waist in a shining coil. She saw him, and was startled, would seemingly have gladly retreated, then recovering herself, came forward with quiet dignity, yet with a painful blush which tinged the entire cheek, and even that portion of the softly rounded throat nearest to him. They both bowed, she very slightly, he with no less respectful gallantry than he would have shown to a duchess. The action was instinctive, but it drew from him a smile at himself afterwards.

"Mrs. Langton's visitor, of course," he said, as he left the house, "and an uncommonly pretty girl, too. My landlady must be something superior to the rest of her class, to judge of the company she keeps. Droll thing I have never seen her."

And he jumped into the private cab which awaited him, its master being the friend of

the day before, with whom he had a dinner engagement.

Fitzroy, as we shall now call him, often laid in wait after this, to discover something of the inmates of the breakfast-room below, and the attic overhead. He was rewarded by seeing a lady occasionally issuing from and returning to the house, but was a little mortified to observe that she was round, and slightly rubicund, and in no wise different to those landladies he had heard or caught distant glimpses of, in the course of his short experience. His interest died out wonderfully, but in proportion as it declined, the image of the young girl he had met on the staircase grew more vivid, until the desire to behold her again, took possession of a mind just then in a state of constrained inactivity, very favourable to the inroads of curiosity or romance.

He never saw the fair incognita the more for all the pains he took, or the inventions he was fain to adopt to entrap her. Some-

times he fancied she must have gone away, but the occasional sounds of the piano downstairs convinced him to the contrary. The touch was so delicate and refined, that he had no difficulty in connecting it with her, and after a while she seemed to grow less shy and nervous, and would even continue to play after he entered the house and was seated in the dining-room, whence the dulcet strains could be heard with perfect distinctness. He had now adopted this room considerably, and inhabited it nearly as much as the sanctum above but wherever he was sitting, he grew accustomed to have the door slightly open, by which means, though he could not see who went upstairs, he could command the light footstep on the staircase, which he knew must belong to her. In this way he wished her a sort of tacit good night, as she went up to bed, always closing his own door immediately after he had heard her shut hers above, until at length his perseverance was rewarded by

catching a glimpse of her dress for a brief instant, sometimes accompanied by the respectable form of the "landlady," who would stop and utter a "Good night to you, sir," in a comfortable and motherly fashion, which, isolated as he was, gave a sort of pleasure to our hero.

Presents of fruit, flowers, accompanied by other little polite attentions, now occasionally found their way from the first floor to the basement, and there is no knowing how far the acquaintance might have progressed, had not Fitzroy received a brief note, signed "Gertrude Langton," disclaiming gently but firmly, all further outlay in such gifts upon the part of her lodger. His estimate of Mrs. Langton's disposition rose several degrees, and he grew suddenly conscious of the impertinence he had been guilty of, in thus presuming upon the very slight knowledge he possessed of the mistress of the establishment. Yet it was strange, could she have discovered

for whom his attentions were actually intended? Not so difficult he thought, after all, and determined to be more careful.

About this time Fitzroy's absences from the house grew more frequent, and business of a serious and perplexing nature occupied him when at home, to the exclusion of almost every other idea. He wrote a great many letters, and invariably posted them himself, seeming afraid to trust them to Bridget's care, perhaps unwilling she should see their addresses.

All that passed upstairs was faithfully retailed in the breakfast-room, for Bridget loved her mistress with an enthusiasm seldom met with now-a-days, in persons of her class and character. It was impossible not to feel interested in the doings of the nameless lodger, around whom floated an atmosphere of such mystery, and one night when he returned seriously indisposed from apparent worry and over-exertion, the good-natured girl so wrought upon Mrs. Langton's feelings of

sympathy, and those of her friend, that it was decided he should receive a visit from the elder lady, and be requested to send for a doctor. Accordingly Bridget arrived with a message—

"Would the 'gentleman' be pleased to see 'Miss Oliver,' she had something particular to say to him?"

Fitzroy half started up from the sofa where he was reclining. His feverish cheek flushed yet deeper, and his eyes sparkled with surprise and curiosity. "Miss Oliver! it must be she! Yet how strange! what could she possibly have to communicate?" but he simply answered that he should be very happy, and begged she might be immediately admitted.

It was pitiable to see Fitzroy's look of disappointment, when the comfortable face and ample dimensions of his supposed landlady appeared at the door of his sanctum, instead of the ethereal figure he had expected to see. The flush faded from his cheek, and his manner fell below freezing point.

"What might Mrs. Langton do him the honour to require of her lodger?"

The poor woman, a little flurried, sat down beside the couch of the young man. Mrs. Langton and she were both very uneasy, she said; Bridget had informed them how poorly the "gentleman" appeared. She had come to beg him to allow them to send for advice, and in a few moments Fitzroy was perfectly *au fait* to everything, being informed that she (Miss Oliver) had been Mrs. Langton's governess when a child, and was accustomed not only to ailments in the young, but those of older patients, while to stop the tide of voluble officiousness she poured forth upon him, he consented to send for a doctor, to go to bed, to swallow an unlimited amount of gruel, and in short do anything to insure her immediate departure.

It proved that advice had not been called in a minute too soon. Fitzroy had taken a violent cold, which, superadded to the state of nervous excitement in which it found him,

caused an attack of slight delirium, and necessitated careful nursing and entire rest for the next few days. Miss Oliver, in her element, installed herself as nurse, and almost expired during the week his illness lasted, of the silence the doctor imposed on her. Gradually, however, as he recovered, she withdrew herself, until at length the attentions died away into inquiries sent by Bridget, as to his convalescence.

Who that has been ill is not cognizant that in the dreamy stupor of weakness, the mind seems to prefigure the future, to become acquainted in a mysterious manner with the present, and to weave out histories which fact afterwards confirms from the past? Fitzroy experienced this, and could not divest himself of the idea that he had been attended by a fairer spirit than Miss Oliver; but all his endeavours at increased intimacy, under pretence of expressing thanks, proved abortive. Yet he seemed to have grown strangely familiar with that soft, sad countenance, the

fleeting vision of the staircase, the little patrician shaped head, with even the small widow's cap, which now appeared so often to conceal the luxuriant tresses, he had accidentally been permitted to see then, and which, with the features they shaded, never since had left his memory.

Meanwhile his suspicions that other steps than those of Bridget visited his domain during his absence, was confirmed by several marks of feminine taste which found their way, and like the fragrance of a blossom haunted the vase whence the flower had been taken. But sadder intervals succeeded: Bridget seemed to have lost her usual spirits:

"Was her mistress ill?"

"No, but she had gone to lie down."

"Why was the piano never heard?"

"Please, sir, it has been taken away."

What with the "lying down" being so frequent, and the silenced instrument, Fitzroy grew perplexed.

He had ascertained that Mrs. Langton had an educated mind, having, when recovering, craftily obtained the loan of certain books, on the margin of which several judicious observations had been set down in the same hand as that which summed up his "little bill." After his convalescence, Fitzroy had quitted London for a fortnight, and on his return, found Bridget still more sad, and on application for the books, discovered that they had followed the piano.

"Was Mrs. Langton going away?"

Bridget seemed rather hysterical, but said, "Missis hadn't told her."

But mystery must have an end, and Time, like an ancient *roué*, takes occasional delight in making singular confessions of his past mad pranks. One evening Fitzroy arrived at his lodgings in haste; as usual, he had forgotten something, and was preparing to assault the stairs, as if it were a second storming of the Redan, when his steps were arrested by what he thought seemed a low sobbing. Yes!

"Don't take on so," said the voice of Bridget.

Who was taking *on?* How could he take himself *off* under such circumstances? The sound of two men talking upstairs decided him.

"Vell, you may go now, and I'll remain in possession. There's enough, I should say, in this here room to pay us out. Howsomever, I'll see about the hinventory."

In an instant Fitzroy's hand was on the collar of the startled official.

"I suppose you know it's an assault," said that worthy; "but I'm no ways particular, and what's more, if you make it worth my while I won't press the charge."

Fitzroy was furious, and having explained to the officer that his property did not belong to Mrs. Langton, ascertained from him that the condition of the remaining part of the house was such as to afford small prospect of liquidating a debt, to Fitzroy's view comparatively trivial. Hastily therefore opening

his desk, he gave the amount to the bailiff and received an acknowledgment. Whether the claim was just or not, Fitzroy never stopped to consider. It was sufficient a law myrmidon came "between the wind and his nobility;" he must be got rid of at any cost. Shall we add that the affair had a tinge of romance about it, and that the idea of figuring as his landlady's pecuniary champion delighted him. "Who would ever have thought," he mused, "that a bailiff should be master of the ceremonies to introduce him to the pretty little woman down stairs?" He followed the man to the basement.

As the bailiff reached the foot of the kitchen steps, the voice of Bridget arrested Fitzroy's progress. Mrs. Langton's door was open, and Bridget was inviting the officer, in no very amiable accents, to step in.

"Here is the pictur," Fitzroy heard her say, "and it goes to missis's heart to part with it; she might have sold it for ever so much had she been so minded, but you must

have it for what you can get, now. But be quick and go, for if the gentleman up-stairs was to come in—"

"Why, bless ye, he is in—and—"

"Have you any reason to stay, sir?" put in Fitzroy sternly, "if not, go away."

The man shrugged his shoulders, made an uncouth attempt at a bow, and disappeared.

Fitzroy had descended the stairs full of *empressement;* what made him stand abashed and timid at the door of the little breakfast room, he had pictured to himself as the incarnation of comfort, the perfection of feminine refinement and good taste? Alas! all was changed except the owner, and as he looked at her, Fitzroy felt that there are some persons, the spectacle of whose sufferings not only at once enlists our sympathy, but our affection. Just such an one was Mrs. Langton. If Fitzroy had fancied her below him, the manner in which she bore her affliction, and the unmistakable evidence of grace which her figure and demeanour threw over sorrow,

commanded that respect which only innately noble minds know how to manifest towards each other.

The young widow was standing in the middle of the desolation, and what desolation did it not appear after the well appointed rooms appropriated to his own use! There was no carpet upon the floor, and every article of comfort or ornament had been removed with the exception of a few chairs, a deal table, upon which stood the cage of the poor parrot, the inmate sadly forlorn and crest fallen, and a large picture of apparent value hanging above the mantel-piece, and which Bridget, perched on some steps, was now essaying with agitated fingers to unfasten from its place. Mrs. Langton was yet paler than her wont, and the traces of tears were on her cheeks, yet did the sudden appearance of Fitzroy at the open door, give her a kind of constrained dignity, amounting to an attempt at indifference, which he could see was so severe an effort, that his heart ached over the struggle

it revealed. He felt so much embarrassed on his part by the knowledge that he ought to say something, and the inability to say it, that half-an-hour afterwards, he could not have declared whether he had favoured the widow with a lecture on Italian paintings or the ceramic illustrations of the Alhambra. What matter? his object was evident, and the promptings of a fine nature eager to alleviate distress, especially—oh! man! man!—*in a pretty woman*, were enhanced in the poor girl's eyes, by Fitzroy's incomplete sentences. She essayed in her turn to thank, yet at the same time to deprecate his aid. Gratitude was, however, too strong, and after an effort she fairly gave way.

In an instant Fitzroy was by her side, and in the paroxysm of her emotion, the gentle nature of his companion was revealed to him. Taking the slender hand within his own, he sat down by her, and soothed her agitation, while she listened with all the yielding confidence of a child. At last she raised her

eyes, suffused with tears, which to Fitzroy seemed to impart a yet more touching loveliness; she put back her rich tresses from her brow—a ringlet or two had escaped—Fitzroy looked at them with a strong appetency for scissors: in a trembling tone she began:—

"I can never thank you sufficiently, but, I assure you, it is not my fault, and I regret deeply that you should have been intruded upon."

Yes! it struck upon Fitzroy's heart that, even at this crisis, the little widow, to whose mind the presence of low intruders must have been abhorrent, thought more of him than of herself. Fitzroy longed to kiss the hand he held.

"Believe me," he replied, "if it could have been occasioned without pain to you, I could almost have thanked the rascals for giving me an opportunity to do you a service. Now if you wish to please me, do not stay here: I am very impetuous and like to have everything my own way, and so must insist upon your

coming upstairs, where, at your leisure, you may tell me how I can further your plans. See, here is your friend, Miss Oliver."

That worthy lady had in fact announced herself, and from her volubility Fitzroy ascertained, before Mrs. Langton could stop her, that the faithful ally had been upon a mission to those pecuniary caves of Æolus whence distressed defaulters somewhat inconsistently seek to repair their disasters by "raising the wind." Her efforts had been partially successful, but her spirits received a marvellous acceleration at the spectacle of the confidential *tête-à-tête* between Fitzroy and his hostess. The whole trio adjourned to the dining-room, where later on, Miss Oliver, in Mrs. Langton's absence, gave him the following particulars.

In a few words, Gertrude Langton had been the daughter of an officer whose martinet habits drew no distinction of sex or relationship. Hence, after the death of her mother, the young girl, by the whim of the

paternal fiat, was sold in the strictest pecuniary sense, for the benefit of her father, to an old man of reputed wealth, and was taken from school to the altar, when she had scarcely numbered seventeen summers. Although Mr. Langton's fortune suffered seriously by speculation, he was yet able to settle the house in which she lived upon his young wife, from whom he was divorced by the hand of death in less than a year after their marriage. Her father had meanwhile been outlawed for debt, so that Gertrude had adopted Miss Oliver's society, as a contingent protection in the letting of her house, the only means by which she could eke out a precarious subsistence. In fact the very debt which had caused her catastrophe was not her own, but resulted from involvements through her father, whose "honour!" did not hesitate to gratify himself at the sacrifice of his child. Happily for her, however, a few months previously, the Colonel had quitted this sublunary scene, an event which, whilst it did not re-

move the onus of the debt from the high-souled daughter, withdrew all future annoyance from the author of it.

"We have now," said Miss Oliver, in conclusion, "only to consider what must be done for the future. As for Gertrude"—Fitzroy wondered whether he should ever call her "Gertrude"—"she's not fit to take care of herself by letting lodgings: you are the first, and will be her last inmate, poor child!"

Mysterious sentence! what had Fitzroy done in that highly miscellaneous character of important insignificance called "a lodger," to make Mrs. Langton an object of pity? Miss Oliver evidently thought that Gertrude suffered through, or for him. The first idea was detestable—the last exquisite.

So a cabinet council was held, in which the high contracting parties,—through the mediation of Miss Oliver, who had, as all plenipotentiaries, to calm down exuberant pride, correct imaginary mistakes of motive, with only the difference that in this case neither

party suspected the other—came to the compact that Fitzroy was still to be a boarder, and that Mrs. Langton was not for the present to give up her "apartments." The only mysterious part about the treaty was as to which party was "tenant," since to overcome Mrs. Langton's scruples, Fitzroy had declared he would keep "lodgings" himself, and that Gertrude and Miss Oliver should be housekeepers, each to take care of distinct floors. We are obliged, however, to state our conviction that in that case Miss Oliver would have been sent to the basement, while Mrs. Langton would have had Fitzroy under lock and key.

The fair widow nevertheless maintained her independence; the picture was sold, though Gertrude thought Bridget rather unfeeling in manifesting a perpetual inclination to smile, whenever her eyes rested upon the forsaken spot where it used to hang. Unknown to Mrs. Langton, a benevolent "comedy of errors" had been played off against her;

Fitzroy bought the picture at an unheard of price, and could hardly himself keep his countenance when a note reached him with the deepest expressions of gratitude, defraying his temporary advance to his landlady, he well knew, with his own money.

A change had come over our hero, who now invariably dined at home in company with the two ladies; never used the latch key for fear of keeping Mrs. Langton up, and who, except Miss Oliver had strongly surmised the truth, would have been pronounced by that sage spinster a "moral" of a man.

"It is a pity," said she to Gertrude, one day, "that this state of things cannot last for ever—yet why it should not, I cannot see. We are all so happy, my dear."

Gertrude was happy, but her mind was made up nevertheless, and she had been stealthily making inquiries for the situation of a governess. One, at last, she resolved to accept, and was preparing in her mind how to reveal the subject; shall we add, how to

fortify her resolution, to resign what she felt to be the happiest hours of her life. She was anticipated.

"Now really, Mrs. Langton," said Fitzroy, one evening, "what I'm going to read you this time is true. I do not mean to make any burlesques upon the advertisements as I usually do, when I read the paper to you. Stay, just listen; no, it is'nt that, that's about 'a governess,' poor creature, who only asks twenty pounds a year, to teach all the sciences, to be snubbed, and get weak eyes from stitching at midnight, into the bargain. No, no, I never mock those suffering Pariahs of society, those butts of purse-proud ignorance, ill-temper and pride!"

Mrs. Langton felt ready to drop.

"Now here it is. You know there are very hard fathers in the world, as well as some rebellious sons, and where the one wants everything, and the other will consent to nothing, they part and are so sick of each other's handwriting, that they will rather pay seven

shillings for correspondence by an advertisement than a penny for a postage stamp. Now just look: 'If F. L. will return to his father, no further attempts shall be made to control his inclinations, which recent circumstances have liberated, as to a proposed alliance. He is therefore besought to forward his present address, and may rely upon the kindest disposal towards the completion of the engagement he has formed.' "

"Curious, is it not?" Fitzroy went on, looking earnestly into the eyes of his companion as he took her hand. Mrs. Langton felt her heart beat, and looked round the room, whence Miss Oliver had vanished.

"Now, don't be frightened," said Fitzroy, "nor look so much like a startled fawn. I was only going to say that the first initial, oddly enough, is mine; and suppose the other should belong to me also? Why, then you have been keeping a truant youth from his unfortunate parent; how cruel! But there is stranger matter than that. This fellow ran

away because he would not give his hand where his heart did not go with it, and they thought —his pursuers, I mean,—that another lady was in the case, when the poor boy had never dreamed of love. Now what shall he do? His father offers him *carte blanche* to marry the idol of his affections. Can you," added Fitzroy, "help him to an idol?"

For a moment, Gertrude was unable to reply, at last she said, forcing a smile:—"Nonsense, Mr. Fitzroy,"—the widow was trying to parry, what she chose to deem badinage, by an extra formality—"How can you suppose that I could give you any advice, even if the case were yours, which, of course, it is not."

"Nevertheless, it is a melancholy truth; I am the luckless wight in question."

"I can never believe it," she replied, colouring deeply; and then, with an effort to recover herself, "forgive me, Mr. Fitzroy, is it possible you can be serious?"

"Never more so in my life," he rejoined,

bending down to look into her eyes, and really he now appeared anything but joking, for there was a falter in his voice, and his lip quivered perceptibly. "It is for you to forgive my coming here, a nameless adventurer to all appearance, just to suit my own purposes, and keep out of the way until the old man relented. I am Fitzroy Lascelles, only son of the baronet of that name; when I first came here, my wish was only to escape Hymen's fetters, now I am going to assume them of my own accord. The inference in the advertisement is perfectly correct."

"You are going to be married!"—Foolish little widow, how poor a control you had over your sweet tell-tale face. Foolish little widow! to turn so ashy pale, and then to tremble so convulsively, that the manly clasp of Fitzroy Lascelles around that slight waist, is necessary to sustain your drooping figure. There! now he has done it; the touch, gentle as it is, has completed your discomfiture, and tears

are raining down upon the little white hands, clasped together on the table.

"Going to be married! yes, dearest Gertrude, I hope so. Of course it all depends on —Why, good Heavens! what have I said to alarm you so? Pray let my arm stay where it is. What on earth is the matter? Did you think it could be anybody else but you? I have my father's consent, I have my own, will you," he added, entreatingly, "deny me *yours?*"

When Miss Oliver, about an hour afterwards, returned to the room, a sudden start of a fair head from an attitude of affectionate repose upon a gentleman's shoulder, must have impressed the duenna with her own great indiscretion in quitting the apartment: yet, strange to say, the old lady seemed anything but conscience-stricken.

"I always thought," she said, when reciting the denouement to a friend, "that something would come of it." Spinsters are never

wrong in their anticipations except about themselves, and "something" is a very safe word, but you'll admit, after this, that nothing is too strange for London; for who upon the face of the earth ever would have expected, when Mrs. Langton put up in her window "Apartments to Let," that her first and only lodger should become her husband, and a tenant for life?

A general "bravo" followed Mr. Driscoll's conclusion of this story, which had banished all desire of sleep for the present from the whole party. The narrator exclaimed:

"Now, then, don't talk of going to bed. Do you think that we can part company without one word from the ladies? Come Mrs. Fullerton, Miss Tressingham, your faces are full of things 'both deep and dangerous,' "they do cream" he continued, waving his hand theatrically, "and mantle—"

"Not like a standing pool," said Lindsay, "which is the very image of stagnation, and a sorry compliment to such intellectual countenances."

"Well, never mind my quotation. Those who vote that the ladies shall tell a story, let them signify the same after the usual fashion."

All but Mrs. Fullerton held up their hands.

"Madam," said Mr. Seymour, turning to her, "it is a forfeit; we listen in respectful silence."

After the various excuses usual in such cases, interrupted by numerous "Pshaws!" and "my dears," from her husband, declarations from her daughter that mamma was a capital story teller, and the significant encouragement from St. Vitus of taking a chair near her, upon which Mr. Driscoll remarked that he was glad to see him comfortably settled, since he had walked many miles on the floor, Mrs. Fullerton proceeded with—

THE ROSARY OF TIME.

THE Rosary of Time—on which he tells our years as they go evenly by, and counts the joys and sorrows of each, sliding from his touch upon the silken string of life, soon to be knotted into the endless round, eternity—so far differs from its type, as that there is no beginning again, when the number is once told. The first beads upon the chain, how bright, how beautiful they are! Crystal, pure, transparent, they are yet colourless; reflecting every visible object in a thousand prisms,

they of themselves possess no tint, but form the medium through which asperities are softened, and beauty grows more bright, the silk on which they are threaded, let it be ever so homely, shining in the midst like twisted gold. Few, however, are these delicate and liquid drops; feeling and circumstance combine to tinge the rapidly succeeding years with dyes so exquisite, that we have no regret for the limpid lustre of those we are just leaving. And now, what a rich profusion follows! rubies, pearls, frequently diamonds, sometimes the more intense glories of the emerald and carbuncle, are strung one after another; but ever and anon in the fair necklace of young hopes, bright thoughts, noble aspirations and deeds, which, in their fresh and most lovely aristocracy of nature, shine as stars among the links of our existence, there comes a drop of jet, which casts its gloomy shadow upon, perchance, the fairest among them, darkening the beauty of its immediate

neighbours with a strange and startling contrast. Then succeed beads of curious and multiform device, quaintly carved in gold and silver, ivory, and wood. Utility has the sway now, and imagination gradually resigns her magic reign to policy, until, at length, as the drops become stained by passions, or darkened by tears, we find them degenerate into plain brass, iron, lead, as the chain becomes complete!

Alas! for those who watch the gems creep from beneath their grasp, and roll noiselessly into the great ocean of the past: alas! for those upon whose ear falls the sound of the golden years of their destiny, speaking, like a funeral knell, the farewell of a last departure, as they fall startlingly into the abyss of oblivion; but doubly alas! for those who look on while the links of another's existence are gradually developed, holding no power to arrest the glittering jewels which form the first and second elements of the chain, and

sadly mourning to see them change into the earthly and sombre particles, so shortly to be united with their kindred dust.

A gentleman, who had perhaps numbered some eight and thirty years, sat with eyes riveted upon a fire, its embers, shaped into a dozen fantastic forms, seeming to have led him into a reverie of absorbed and wondering interest, in the quiet cosiness of a warm and elegantly furnished library. The windows, heavily curtained by thick crimson draperies, scarcely permitted the faint wailing of the wind to be heard, softened as it was by a dense fall of snow, on something like such a night as the present. With head partially depressed, and brows slightly knitted over placid yet penetrating eyes, the mould of that fine forehead shaded by curling dark hair, which time or thought, or both, had already driven from the temples, as if to

render more apparent the impress of mental beauty joined to that of the heart, both so almost invariably accompanied by a physically refined development; his hands clasped upon his crossed knee, and the outline of the manly figure gently inclining towards one side of the deep arm-chair in which he sat, he might have formed a picture sufficiently attractive to prevent the spectator from observing that he was not alone.

Seated on a low stool at the other side of the fire, and immediately opposite, was a girl whose years were just at that transition-epoch between the absolute departure of the crystalline age of the child, and the ascertained and brilliant beauty of the woman, in many cases the brightest point in the whole career, partaking of what is most lovely in the past and future, and forming a present, ever interesting, even when it fails to enthral and captivate. The baby roundness of the soft cheek, the tresses waving upon the neck and bosom, the delicacy of the little form, might have deceived

you into thinking her some years younger than she was, had not her eyelids been lifted at intervals to the face of her companion with a furtive glance, which, while seemingly fearful of disturbing his reflections, revealed the true woman's dignity, keenly touched by the neglect of her presence, implied by a reverie, unreasonably protracted. Yet she was, to all appearance, reading, this girl, though the lamp, which stood on a circular table in the centre of the room, was far too remote to aid her studies, and the fire flickered so incessantly that many words together could scarcely have been perceptible to the concentrated vision of even Argus himself. The gentleman, meantime, was too occupied by his day-dream to observe that no great facilities could be afforded from the present position of the sole light the room contained, for the perusal of the book she held so perseveringly in her hand, yet, had he peeped over her shoulder, he would have ascertained the fact that it was upside-down. How much longer

the patience of the little lady would have held out is uncertain, but a sofa, tenanted by a third party, now creaked heavily as a burning coal fell from the fire, and although the sleeper, scarcely awakened by the noise, merely changed her position, and resumed the slumber and the snore almost simultaneously, the ice was broken, and a weight seemed removed from the fair shoulders of the would-be student, as, shrugging them, and with a scarcely-suppressed yawn, she exclaimed poutingly: "How dull, how very dull we are!"

Her remark at once aroused her companion: his dream had been of a somewhat anxious nature, and it seemed no annoyance to be disturbed by the silver accents in which the lament was uttered, followed by the prettiest little laugh in the world, which, as he raised his eyes to hers, seemed most naturally to infect himself.

"Dear Geraldine!" he said, "we are dull indeed, your aunt stretched on the sofa, and

snoring musically, I poring over the fire wrapped in a cloud of thick-coming fancies, and letting you read by fire-light, and spoil the eyes which are to do so much execution anon. Why you will wish yourself back with Miss Duval, spending the holidays with two or three of your homeless companions, rather than be the victim of the unmitigated vapourishness of Leversden Parsonage. Come, dear, let me have a peep at those drawings of yours, and see if I have quite forgotten how to give the hints you wanted, and then, when Aunty wakes, we will have some music."

As he spoke he rested his hand caressingly upon the bright head of the beauty, for such she certainly was, who had risen, and now stood at his side. She seemed, however, in no hurry to fetch the portfolio in question, but, after a minute's pause, replied, in a low tone, and glancing towards the sofa—

"No, no, leave the drawings alone for the present, I will not disturb her by going for them now; let us talk a little, please: I am

not dull if you will not sit looking at the fire and thinking about anything in the world but poor me, who only came back to you all, three short days ago."

"And what if the reveries you so deprecate, were about your little ladyship?" he returned, gently drawing her into the seat next his own; "I was thinking more of you, Geraldine, than any one else, except, indeed, of Laurence, who occupied a considerable share also. Can you partly guess my thoughts, dear, or must I tell you all I was picturing about Laurence's coming, and what he would say when he finds you have left school, and are a lady at large, ready to walk, and ride, and sing, and draw with him, as you used in the summer?"

"Laurence, indeed, deserves that I should never take any notice of him again," replied Geraldine, the same pouting expression resting for a moment on her lip; "his long absence would alone warrant me in ceasing to care whether he ever comes; but why talk of him? tell me the other parts of your reverie,

though if they are not more amusing, I shall hardly think them worth the trouble of listening to."

"You are a spoiled child, Geraldine, and I often determine not to humour your fancies, but in truth my remembrance had wandered back to old times, when you, little sylph, nestled in these arms, or rode upon my shoulder; and then memory drew me farther back still, and," he added, with a graver air, "Laurence's youth and childhood also passed before me, his birth—his mother's death—our most unhappy marriage!"

He paused, she had taken his hand, and was silently pressing her lips upon it.

"Listen, Geraldine," he resumed; "I know not why I should conceal aught in the past from you, who are both old and thoughtful enough to understand the recital of whatever in the life of your guardian you are unacquainted with, but—" and a little hesitation was perceptible in his tone, which steadied as he went on, "but, if I tear open wounds

which years have almost closed, it is for your benefit, and neither to indulge an idle curiosity on your part, nor a weak melancholy on my own. Yours is naturally a character, dearest, which has many noble and beautiful endowments, but all is not perfect, and the weeds of a woman's vanity and pride may impede, and even destroy, the growth of flowers which are ready to blossom in a congenial soil. If you knew, Geraldine, with what anxiety I have watched over you ever since your father's dying breath confided yourself and your lost mother to my care, you would begin to understand the weight of responsibility I feel when I contemplate your entrance into that world, which I will not chill your youthful hopes by painting in the sternly ascetic colouring of a disappointed man. Your fate, too, will possibly be soon decided, for you are too favoured by Nature, mentally as well as bodily, to remain long unsought; and if I mistake not, your own natural temper scarcely points to a single life. Your father,

Geraldine, was, as you have often heard, my earliest and dearest friend; boys, youths, and men together, at school, and at college, although our tastes were in many instances dissimilar, nothing ever interrupted the unreserved confidence of Gerald Northcote and myself. Of a strangely wild and imaginative nature, consumption had early set its seal upon the fair tenement which enclosed that noble spirit; yet few would have suspected the close vicinity of the coiled serpent to its victim, its approach concealed by the elasticity and freshness of youthful beauty, indeed I had almost said, of strength, which appeared innate in him. Providentially you, Geraldine, have not inherited your father's constitutional weakness; but your features, and in some respects your mind, assimilate to his, whose extreme sensitiveness involved too frequently the fatal consequences, though destitute of the selfishness, of pride.

By the interest of a connexion, General Aylmer, we both obtained commissions in

the same regiment, and were ordered to Gibraltar, apparently for an absence scarcely more than nominal, owing to the expiration of the term of service, which circumstance prevented any excessive regret at parting from home associations, allayed already in no slight degree by the ardour of youth for novelty, and active scope for ambition. Previous, however, to quitting England, Gerald had promised to pay a farewell visit to his uncle, of whose daughter, Helen Northcote, I had often heard him express his unqualified admiration. Nor did it appear to me as an improbable result to this visit, as I laughingly told him, to render separation from his country a matter of more serious import. A week passed after his departure, Gerald had written to me once, he described his reception as most cordial, everything was '*en couleur de rose*, Helen, fairer, gentler than ever; the house was to be full of company for the summer recess, and preparations were making for a ball and all sorts of gay doings. After this

a week or ten days went by, and having written to Gerald more than once, and receiving no answer, I was scarcely surprised when a few hurried lines reached me, more than accounting for his silence, in something like the following words:—

"'DEAR LAURENCE,

"'Forgive my neglect, I have been too occupied and too happy to find one moment's leisure for the claims of friendship; I cannot stay to tell you *all*, but only that you have been a true prophet as regards my regretting to leave England; at the present moment I heartily wish the —th, Gibraltar, and my new uniform, which, by the bye, fits me splendidly, at the bottom of the Red Sea; only do you come down to Northcote at once, lose no time, and meanwhile keep the secret of yours affectionately,

GERALD.'

"Enclosed was a warm invitation from Sir

Henry to his nephew's friend, and so interested and delighted was I with the happy tone of Gerald's note, that I followed up the acceptance I immediately wrote to the baronet, by setting off in the course of the next day for the scene of the love affair, which I fully expected was enacting.

"A lovely spot is Northcote—your grandfather's, and now your uncle's, dear Geraldine, I have promised you shall one day see it; he is your other guardian, too, and though rendered by Lady Northcote's health a constant absentee in Italy, he will be pleased to hear you have visited your mother's home, which after my story, you will yourself probably feel more interested in than ever. Imagine a park, enclosed by undulating hills clothed with foliage, which, at the season of my first visit, presented all the warm and picturesque tinting of the autumnal pencil. Deer scattered in groups, fed on the soft emerald pasturage, or gazed at their own reflections in the bosom of a narrow, but exquisitely wind-

ing stream, which ran for miles amid the home scenery, and closely approximated in one spot, to the mansion.

"The sun was setting as I reached a point whence I could perceive this last, built in the gorge of a ravine which formed a wild and spirited background, while in front stretched a broad table lawn, enclosed by a fence, and terminating on one side in the water, and on the other in a flower-garden, partially divided into a Dutch parterre, where quaint formality agreeably contrasted with the careless exuberance of nature around. Riding down the declivity of the broad gravel road, I lost sight of the house, and soon arrived at a rustic lodge, the gate of which, on application to the portress, admitted me into an avenue of tall beeches, amongst whose boughs the chastened sunlight found its way in chequered patches upon the turf beneath. I gazed with the admiration of a poet and a painter, for mine was the age when we fancy ourselves, and perhaps are intrinsically, both, upon the

long vista beyond; nor was my interest in the scene diminished, by the appearance of a lady a little in advance, whose graceful and easy figure was in perfect keeping with the beauty of the natural arch beneath which she walked. My horse's steps fell noiselessly upon the turf, while the lady seemed lost in thought, so that I was close upon her before she was aware of my approach. As she turned, a look of bright pleasure danced in her eyes, but apparently she had expected to see some other face, for her gaze was withdrawn, and the light faded from her cheek, as she perceived a stranger. I raised my hat, she replied by a movement of politeness; it was evident she wished me to continue my path without further parley, for reaching a few steps further, she slackened her pace, so that I might pass her. Was this the way Helen Northcote, my friend's affianced, for Helen I determined in an instant it should be, and I were to meet, my heart absolutely brimming with interest and

brotherly affection towards her, which I had embodied in a neat little speech that had cost me the last ten minutes to arrange for the moment of our introduction. As this passed through my mind I resolved to declare myself, and for that purpose drawing rein, I dismounted, and turning back, the bridle on my arm, rejoined the lady, whose shyness I hoped to thaw, by the announcement of my real interest in her lover.

"'I have the honour of addressing Miss Northcote,' began I inquiringly, 'Miss Helen Northcote,' for at that moment I remembered the fact of another daughter's existence 'of whom I would ask permission to introduce myself as the Laurence Aylmer, expected by her cousin Gerald, at his home.'

"She started slightly at the first part of my speech, but recovering herself, immediately replied in a tone of freezing hauteur.

"'An introduction is unnecessary, since, although Mr. Aylmer is easily recognised, I am not Miss Helen Northcote.' A half super-

cilious smile seemed to play upon her lips as she uttered these words in a distinct tone, and embarrassed not less by my mistake, than her air of studied formality, I felt the blood rush to my cheek, whilst, at the risk of offending my unknown companion, I asked if Gerald were yet at the Hall, scarcely awaiting an answer, which, however, fate prevented from ever arriving at maturity. The young lady, quickening her steps, as it appeared with a pettish desire to get out of my way, struck her foot, just as the last words left my lips, against a fallen branch covered with moss; and, really, though for a moment I was frightened lest the delicate ancle should have been seriously injured, I could with difficulty repress a feeling of pleasurable triumph, when, uttering a slight cry of pain, she placed her arm within the support of mine, involuntarily extended to her assistance.

"The injury was trifling, but after trying to support herself, and finding it impracticable, the haughty beauty abandoned the farce of

formality, by turning upon me the whole of her splendid eyes' artillery, concluding by a burst of most musical and contagious merriment, during which her countenance underwent a complete transformation; nor did she again relapse into anything approaching to her former demeanour, but gaily commenced a conversation, promising from the difficulty with which she used her sprained foot, to be somewhat protracted.

"'And so you are Laurence Aylmer,' she said; 'we have all been looking forward to your arrival, though you were not expected quite so soon in the day. You asked after Mr. Northcote, too; he is well, I believe, if a man may be said to be well, who is doing his extreme *possible* to flirt himself into a fever. At the present moment he has gone a ride with his fair cousin, the Helen for whom I had the felicity to be mistaken just now.'

"I thought I could detect a shade of the old pettishness as she thus spoke, but she continued with scarcely a moment's pause:—

"'I hate flirting men—a man has no business to flirt, besides generally being horribly awkward at it; a dull matter-of-fact John Bull, indeed, who scarcely knows how to make real love with grace, can't angle decently, as you sportsmen say, and yet attempts fly-fishing! Why don't you leave it to us who, at all events, flirt *well*—and have often nothing else to amuse us.'

"'I do not exactly see how that is practicable,' I replied; 'surely where opportunity offers, and we behold the example so charmingly set us, it is easier to discuss than retain neutral ground. Who can be exposed to the witchery of a pair of fine eyes without responding to the gentle language they utter?'

"She laughed, and in a few momentswe were in an earnest colloquy upon the ever fertile, inexhaustible subject of love-making, rather a dangerous one I must avow, considering that the arguments of my adversary, as I chose to render her by espousing every opposite opinion to her own, were

supported by a set of features upon whose perfection of beauty, was impressed the charm of a refined and keenly susceptible intelligence.

"Before I arrived at the house, I had made up my mind that the fascinating creature who hung upon my arm, must be immeasurably superior to Gerald's gentle love, and found myself not only in anticipation impugning his taste, but half-inclined to set him against his future bride. Amidst all the gay rattle, however, of my animated acquaintance, I was frequently surprised by an air of anxiety, of absence, which every now and then disturbed the flood-tide of her wit and raillery, and when we reached our destination, so far from attempting to do the honours of the mansion, she disappeared like a sun-beam, during a moment's pause, whilst I was giving some directions about my horse, on whom the journey had told somewhat considerably.

On making my appearance in the drawing-room, I found the master of the house alone.

We soon became acquainted; I was irresistibly drawn towards the kind old man, who seemed to regard Gerald already as a son. Of course the general conversation of so recent an introduction did not permit my making direct allusion to the probability of my friend becoming really related, even had he not insisted upon my keeping his secret. I discovered that my incognita was a friend of Helen's, named Margaret Trevanion, who had been staying at the Hall for the last fortnight, a noted belle, the load-star of the county; the old gentleman, indeed, seemed scarcely free from her enchantments. He appeared surprised at the progress we had made towards intimacy, assuring me that she was one who rarely granted a smile to any of her adorers, and, indeed, awed them as much by her frigid manner and occasionally bitter sarcasms, as she enslaved them with her charms. 'How can it be,' thought I, 'that Gerald remains so faithful to his boyish attachment, in this atmosphere of attraction?'

"One by one the guests began to arrive; there was to be a dinner party, and, the younger portion whispered to each other, a dance in the evening. Gerald came in late, but had only just time to exchange a hearty greeting with me, before two ladies appeared —one of them the majestic and queenly Margaret—the other, as I this time rightly conjectured, Miss Helen Northcote.

"Have you ever heard your mother described, Geraldine? if not, I will sketch her for you now. Nature never formed a face where artless innocence and modesty united with lines of such high and noble purpose of character. Feminine talent, and that grace which is inborn, else unattainable through life, looked forth from every lineament of the gentle features, to form a gem worthy of being set in the crown of an emperor. It was not that the features were regular, there was nothing remarkable at first sight in eyebrow or lip, nothing to attract attention when in repose, but the great master-chord of her bosom

had been touched, alas! too painfully at this period, and the emotions flitting, like the cloud shadows which evoke nature's loveliest hues, across that pale face, rendered it a just index of the unseen spotless soul within, whose holiest and brightest sympathies lay ready to spring to life at a breath, a tone of the beloved one. More like the soft spirit glances that bend over us in our slumbers, than anything earthly, was the angelic expression of Helen Northcote's features; you might have embodied in her the lovely Undine of the German story, in that moment when first the soul gift had been fully felt.

"I had no time then to observe these characteristics closely, for Gerald interrupted me by taking the hand of Miss Trevanion, and saying in a low voice,

"'Now, Laurence, let me present you to this lady, who is—'

"But I shall never forget the ludicrous look of surprise he gave us, as she quietly disengaged her hand, and approaching nearer,

placed it momentarily in mine, as she established herself in the corner of the nearest sofa, and indicated by a bewitching smile, that I was expected to take possession of the seat immediately beside her.

"I was too occupied with her flattering recognition to pay much attention to the demeanour of Gerald and his cousin, but I caught a word or two of Helen's, showing that she was aware of the method of my meeting with her friend, and was laughingly explaining it to him.

"Absorption is a feeble word to express the intense interest by which I found myself encompassed during the whole of that fatal evening. I was taken captive, enchained by the extraordinary and flattering attention my companion lavished upon me. Leaning on my arm she entered the dining-room, and I do not think she addressed half a dozen words to any other than myself, the entire time of the ladies remaining there. Gerald and his cousin were almost opposite, and although I

had only leisure for an occasional cursory glance towards them, I could perceive that they regarded my progress with a surprise, which indeed was more or less shared by every person at the table. Politics, history, science, philosophy, and even love, every subject was summoned and dismissed with a wild gaiety which led the listener into a labyrinth of argument, only that he might in the midst, find himself, with an unceremonious fascination, suddenly drawn to the verge of some fresh topic, into which both plunged with no room for regret for the one which had just agitated sympathy or aroused pride.

"After the ladies had left the table, Margaret whispering to me not to be long before I sought the drawing-room, and promising to be my partner in the first dances, I had leisure, released from the spell which had thus long bound me, to turn my attention to Gerald, with whom I longed to converse, not less about his own love affair, than upon the extraordinary conquest I appeared to have

made of 'the belle of the county.' But to my annoyance, Sir Henry, within one of whom I was seated, motioned me immediately to his side, and I found myself involved in a conversation at one end of the table, while Gerald was occupied with his immediate neighbour almost at the other. There was an end to this at last, however, and heartily sick of the strictures upon poor-laws and rates, with which a friend of the baronet was regaling us, I felt boyishly delighted when Gerald and the younger part of the company rose to leave the room. He passed his arm within mine as the door closed upon us, but the presence of others prevented any further conversation than was comprised in the whispered congratulation I made him, which he seemed to receive in an even more anxious and excited manner than the occasion warranted. The next moment we were in the drawing-room, which, at the moment of our entrance, was filled by the sweet voice of Helen Northcote, carolling some simple ballad. I expected

to see Gerald attracted immediately to her side, but although I detected a half-glance from her, accompanied by a certain tremulous falter of her accents, he came not, and as I took my place by her at the piano, I again looked round, and saw him with a hesitating but cold manner, address himself to Miss Trevanion, who sat at the other side of the room, bending over a book. Helen and I conversed some time together, and though pre-occupied, as it was evident she was, by every movement of her cousin, sufficient contrast was afforded in the clear frank-heartedness of her remarks, to make me feel considerably in doubt as to the superiority, in mental qualification at least, of the charming syren, Margaret Trevanion. Helen was precisely the woman I had ever made my ideal in day-dreams of the future, and, but that friendship's claims had steeled my heart to her, I hardly think the brilliancy of her competitor could have prevented me from yielding my affections irretrievably to the gentle being,

whose ideas seemed the very expression of my own, but, echo-like, far more beautiful, as well as truthful, from her lips, than conceived in my mind.

"Tea came, and then one of the party striking up a lively waltz, I advanced to Margaret to claim her promised hand. Gerald and she were still sitting talking together; he looked up on my approach, his cheek was pale, and an expression of pain compressed the lips. He guessed my errand, however, and immediately rose to resign his companion. As she put her arm in mine, he looked at her a moment, and then whispered something in her ear; she answered in too low a tone for me to distinguish her words, and as she did so I felt her hand tremble with emotion; had I looked upon her face, I should have seen its proud beauty desolated by a storm of rage. Alas! could I have done so, a veil might have been rent from my eyes, but, blind as I was, flattered vanity and boyish admiration combined to work the wretchedness of future

years, nor were the few short words she uttered—'I will not be lectured,'—permitted to reach the sense which would have been awakened by them, to the real precipice on which I was standing.

"The exclusiveness of my homage on that eventful night, did not gain me friends in either the male or female portion of the community. It was late when they separated, and recent as was our meeting, Gerald and I were too weary to spend any time in conversing after the evening was over. The next morning, when I rose, what was my surprise to find that Gerald had accompanied his uncle to a distant part of the county on particular and sudden business, leaving a note begging me to excuse his temporary absence, and confiding me to the care of his cousin.

"When we assembled at the breakfast table, my comments were met upon Helen's part by a confusion which, in her sensitive and transparent nature, I considered fully justified by the circumstances of even temporary absence

from her lover, but I confess my pride was altogether shattered by Margaret's reception of me It was hardly credible that we had been in those same rooms upon a footing of the most cordial intimacy which the short period of our acquaintance warranted, the night before, for had I placed the chilling stranger of the avenue in the drawing-room at Northcote without the interval of a moment, she could not have been less thawed into familiarity. 'She is a finished coquette,' I thought, and swallowing my vanity and annoyance, I determined to absent myself till dinner-time, that she might be restored to an appreciation of my value. It is not necessary to go through the events of the remaining interval before Gerald returned, one incident alone need be noticed; the travellers were detained beyond the time they expected, and this delay was announced in a letter to Helen. The morning of the receipt of this letter, I came accidentally upon the two friends, Margaret and Helen, at a sudden turn in the

shrubbery. Helen was in tears, and appeared to be anxiously persuading her companion to something, which the other as pertinaciously refused. When I appeared, Margaret left Helen, and, with a return of her former wiles, drew an at first unwilling acquiescence from my outraged dignity, to ride with her. Helen opposed this, and I am not sure I admired her as much as before, when, seeing it impracticable to persuade Margaret to relinquish her wish, she volunteered going with us, which was carried *nolens volens*, and thus prevented the *petits soins* which I only wanted an excuse to lavish on her friend. After this ride Margaret's manner resumed all, or a great deal, of its cordiality, and on Gerald's return we had made so much progress that I began seriously to question myself about the matter, and discover what were the pros and cons respecting it. At the outset of my investigation, however, I found I dared not look too closely at the feeling I entertained for Margaret. Few men can think seriously of a coquette for a

wife, and that Margaret was a coquette I knew by experience.

"The morning of Gerald's return brought my intentions to a crisis. Poor Gerald! when I reflect upon the whole circumstances of the case, my affection clings more fondly than ever to him; and yet how unwisely did he act, what a cruel silence did his mistaken pride cause him to keep, respecting the issue of our fate which was at hand. Dear, noble-hearted Gerald! years are passed since time has softened the remembrance of all the pain which thy conduct, half the result of self-sacrifice, half of indomitable pride, entailed upon me; but mine, too, Geraldine, was the fault; had I not been enveloped in the cerements of vanity, I must have seen some strange things in the manner of all these three young people, to assure me of a mystery, easily enough fathomed by a mere spectator, but then a sealed book to me.

"But to return, Gerald came back. Margaret, as I afterwards remembered, when I

could look back with dispassionate scrutiny upon the circumstances, Margaret seemed to have changed places with Helen during the few hours immediately anterior to his arrival. She was subdued, restless, sensitive to every word uttered by those around her, and at last, as if she could no longer bear companionship with other than her own thoughts, she abruptly left the room, saying her head ached violently, and that she should go and lie down. But a few moments after, the baronet's sturdy voice was heard, and Helen, her cheek changing alternately from pale to red, ran out to welcome her father, and returned in a minute or two, her arm in his, Gerald following. The latter neither looked for Margaret on his entrance, nor asked after her, but coming to me directly, we at length enjoyed the pleasure of a long chat, which by me was hailed with the liveliest joy. I longed to pour out my whole heart to him, and to ask his advice before I took the all-important step which I then meditated. First of all, however, I whispered

him how anxious, how agitated his Helen had been in his absence, and with a conviction which, somehow, sent a pang through my own heart, I told him how perfect I considered his choice in everything, and hinted my envy of his happy prospects. He made me no answer, but once looked up at Helen as she sat talking animatedly to her father, and sighed. I rallied him upon his melancholy, and shaking it off with an effort, he struck boldly at the subject I wished most to enter upon, though he turned to caress his dog Juno, with affected carelessness, as he inquired, 'And how, Laurence, are you getting on with Miss Trevanion?'—still the face averted, that I might plunge without a ray of light into the fatal depth.

"I heeded alas! nothing but my own emotions, and soon Gerald was in possession of my hopes, my fears, and the encouragement which I was receiving, and I had every certainty I should receive from Margaret. At last Gerald abruptly said:—

"'Spare me now, dear Laurence, further recitals; we will talk again by and by. I shall have much to say to you on the subject, so do not take any decided step till I have done so; now I must go to poor Helen, to whom you see I have hardly spoken.' He went and sat near her, and after conversing a few minutes they left the room together.

"Vainly did I expect Margaret's appearance. In the bright autumn evening I walked on the soft turf beneath her window, and sung an invitation to her to come forth, but all was useless, and at last I determined to gather a bouquet for her, which I would persuade Helen to convey, with a message of condolence and compliment. For this purpose I wandered among the flower-beds, and the moon rose whilst I was fastidiously seeking the sweetest blossoms I could discover. A few exotics were necessary to complete my little love-gift, and wending my steps towards the conservatory, my eyes fixed upon the flowers which I was arranging in the most telling

fashion, I almost came against Gerald, who, with agitated and hurried steps, was passing me when I called upon him to stop.

"Why, Gerald!' I exclaimed, 'whither so fast—where have you been—where is Miss Northcote?'

"'Laurence,' he cried, almost sternly, 'let me go—I will not be detained—Helen is somewhere in the grounds—I left her not long since yonder'—he pointed back as he spoke—'yonder, in the Dutch garden—go, go and seek her—I cannot stay—I cannot speak to you!'

"'Some lovers' quarrel,' I thought, and my heart ached for Gerald, whatever the case might be. 'Perhaps Helen may explain,' I mentally exclaimed, and I was within a few paces of the spot indicated by him when I recollected my flowers, and, with a view to my own purposes, determined to give her the bouquet at the same time. I retraced my steps towards the conservatory; the handle turned softly, and admitted me

into this beautiful little retreat, which communicated with the house through a vestibule leading to the drawing-room. The moon was now high in the heavens, and its light fell upon the glossy leaves of the camellias and oranges, while the night air had drawn forth that peculiar and overpowering odour from the heliotrope, with whose blossoms the greenhouse was crowded, which the supposed god of her idolatry fails to elicit. Geraldine! several years have rolled slowly by since then, and still I cannot pluck a blossom of heliotrope without a shudder, so agonising are my remembrances of that evening's events. In the centre of the conservatory stood Margaret, her face deadly pale, her large eyes dilated into an expression of surprise and wildness painful to behold; her hair, all unbound, lay in rich masses upon her shoulders, and was pushed aside from her forehead, whose marble hue was more than rivalled by her cheeks, save that in the centre of each of them burned a clear spot of crimson.

This, combined with the curl of her haughty and disdainful lip, rendered her like the Cassandra of old, about to launch her thunders far and wide, upon the devoted Troy. Her hands were tightly clasped upon her heart, and her whole attitude betokened the extreme of proud agony. The noise I made, though slight, in closing the door, caused her to start violently, and make a movement forward, which, as I advanced, was followed by a visible shudder. The next moment I had received her sinking figure, and the silence was broken by the wild hysterical sobs which, unable to control her emotion, I was constrained to hear, harrowing my very soul, as she lay powerless and trembling in my arms. I know not what I said, what protestations I made, but as her voice subsided into accents of thrilling anguish, I fancied that the fixed look of her eyes was lessened, and that she understood a word here and there of the impassioned inquiries I made—fool that I was!—for the occasion of her illness. Gradually she

recovered, there was a pause; at length turning upon me a face from whose features every trace of colour, I had almost said of emotion, had disappeared, for though the tears still hung upon her dark lashes, she was perfectly calm; she spoke in a voice which I had never heard firmer than now, while hanging on every word, I listened breathless to the fiat she was about to pronounce.

"'Laurence Aylmer,' she said, her eyes searchingly fixed upon me, 'Laurence Aylmer, you have been witness to an outbreak of delirium, which I would fain have hid from the eyes of every earthly being. You ask the cause, and doubtless a maiden blush should dye my cheeks when I answer—yourself! What prompted me to come hither to-night I know not, but I have long felt as if nature could no longer bear the strain of internal emotion which has been maddening me during the few last days. You say you love me, Laurence, I will not affect not to have seen it, I expected to hear you say so; many

women, most women, I believe, have a strange revelation of what is to come some time in their lives, mine has been now; the moment when my good and evil genius have warred for my destiny, is just passed—let us remember it no more. You say you wish to marry me; you will meet with no scruples, no affected delicacy on my part; if you love me, you love one who is differently constituted to others; I understand no limit to the word, but I have my own ideas as to what is worthy, and what is unworthy of it. Do not expect extraordinary happiness with me for your wife, it will never be yours, but if you think me calculated to form a fit companion through the many thorny paths of this wretched and soul-sickening world, I will be that wife, at least, I can promise a faithful one. No thanks, no thanks,' she continued, as neither the strangeness of her address, nor the wild lustre of her eyes, again gleaming with agitation, could prevent my endeavouring to pour forth my wild and insane triumph

at the assurance that the beautiful and haughty woman, whose waist my arm still encirled, was in truth my own.—'No thanks, sir,—Laurence, if you will have it so, but let us part now; to-morrow I shall be better able to understand this evening's work—to repay your affection—to enjoy the happiness of my—of my—engagement.'

"Gliding past like some marble statue animated into motion, the door closed upon her, and I was alone.

"Let me pause here—I cannot dilate upon the events which followed. Gerald was kind in his congratulations, and Helen also, but Margaret, who received on the morrow a letter, which she said made it necessary she should immediately return home, urged me to an instant declaration of our engagement to my family, preparatory to the obtaining the consent of hers, promising to write to me on her arrival at home, and so we parted. It was evident that Gerald had something to say to my betrothal, for he received the news of

it with positive pain, but I easily attributed it to dislike of Margaret's peculiar character, and predetermined as I was not to hear one syllable against her, he said but few words of dissuasion. Before I left Northcote, however, I found that so far from having proposed to Helen, he had not the most remote intention of doing so, though he could not deny that in his heart he reciprocated her evident partiality. I fancied, indeed, that success had rendered him capricious, and rated him soundly upon it when he began to retract his former words about regretting to leave England, declaring that now he was most anxious to be gone.

"Returned to London, little difficulty presented itself to the accomplishment of my wishes; my engagement had met with my father's hearty approval, and with him did I present myself, at the residence of the widowed Mrs. Trevanion, where every preliminary was soon arranged for our speedy nuptials. There was, of course, much to be done in the

interval, and during its six months' period I saw but little of my future wife. She never made much profession, her air was usually cold, but after the first feeling of disappointment, I became accustomed to her manner, and perhaps liked her the better for it, especially as I could not doubt her attachment, since at times, on seeing me pained, she would step out of her ordinary path of quiet and subdued demeanour, to evince some mark of regard, as novel as it was excessive. But, as I have said, we saw little of each other, and I have often thought her letters were softer, tenderer than she was, and so did not attempt to force a more positive kind of happiness by being oftener in her company. Meantime your father, Geraldine, set off alone for Gibraltar; I was to follow, as Margaret consented to accompany me after our marriage. Our correspondence had strangely dwindled lately, for in his letters he never answered my raptures about her, and I found that Helen and her friend also, had grown

cool. Altogether I was disgusted and annoyed with what I considered the prejudice the Northcotes had taken against the object of their former admiration, and, now that I was away from Margaret, those faults which had so often repelled me, the opinions which had so often grated harshly upon my feelings, being unseen, I remembered only her pre-eminent attractions, the haughty dignity which had drawn every man to her feet, her graceful and powerful mind, and could less understand than ever that any could but admire and adore this peerless, this exalted woman, whose heart and soul I considered irrevocably my own.

"We were married; the dream of romance was over, reality about to begin, oh! Geraldine, what a reality! Have I told you enough of the past, and have you observed what youth must have been from my maturer age, sufficiently to imagine the blow, the death blow to all my hopes of domestic happiness, when, after a fortnight's tenderness, as excessive, as

devoted, as man can mete to woman, I discovered that I had gained not one step in the heart of my wife, since the hour that had made her mine? Prepared by my almost over-sensitive expectations of conjugal oneness, for the utmost confidence from her, I had given up in our courtship my hopes of reciprocal tenderness, only to find that marriage, so far from realising them, seemed to establish a kind of barrier to the exhibition of anything like a congenial feeling or thought. To do Margaret justice, this was less the result of design than real sincerity: she had never loved me, and duty was to her mind far from a motive ever likely to supply the absence of affection. She had, indeed, with all her pride, not the smallest idea of controlling her emotions, yet when I look back to the past, blighted as has been my whole career from my disappointment in her, I am obliged to confess in all candour that had her mother, who, blindly devoted to this only child, was immediately the cause, by her weak indulgence and con-

stant praise, of the principal faults of a being so dear to her, only stepped forward at this time, when she was well aware of the state of Margaret's mind towards me, there might have been a prospect at least of that negative kind of happiness, which one-half of married people around us share, after the first discovery of each other's characters and hearts has been made. But my pride, which had hitherto slumbered, was at length aroused; not that I ever suspected Margaret's former attachment, but when I had exhausted all my powers of melting the quiet frost of her unsatisfactory demeanour, I scorned to waste further regrets upon a woman who, I believed, took a pleasure in endeavouring to exalt herself, by the ignoring every intense emotion she possessed. Alas! the slumbering volcano was far less to be dreaded than when, casting aside all concealment, it should assume decided action, and hurl destruction around! With such feelings on both sides, it is not to be wondered at that when, after

three months, the time arrived for me to join my regiment, I met Margaret's declaration that her health was in too weak a state to hazard a sea-voyage, accompanied by a tacit acknowledgment of decided disinclination, with but little opposition; and withal making what arrangements I could for her comfort in my absence, and establishing Mrs. Trevanion, who, I believe, now began to see and deplore the evils of her own mismanagement, with her daughter, I set forth a weary and blighted man, although not having by some months attained the age when the law looks upon us as past infancy.

"And now returned the heart, bent back to the last point of wrung affection, to the natural bias of its former friendship. Gerald and I met with a warmth which completely obliterated all shade of former misapprehension. I had written to tell him of my coming, and distressed beyond the power of retaining the secret pent up in my own overcharged breast, I had poured out on the paper, a detail of the

fatal coldness of my wife, and my impression that she was incapable of anything like a solid and lasting attachment. This recital, I afterwards learnt, had been expected by him; when it came, it cost him some bitter hours, and on our meeting it cast an inexpressible and almost feminine softness over his reception of me. Though we never directly alluded to the subject, his advice had often a bearing upon the state of matters at home, and insensibly the sun of Hope rose again in my breast, as he led me to examine my own heart, and made me promise to be guided in all things, by a reasoning which, ever manly and noble in its deductions, I could not but regard as almost infallible, coming from such a mind, in ensuring success. I wrote to my wife, simply therefore, though affectionately, abstaining from making any complaints as to our separation, but drawing her thoughts into such channels as might produce a healthy tone of mind, whilst each letter contained some allusion to my return home, and an im-

plied hope that we might then discover how much happier both might be, in mutual association.

"Several months went by, and one morning the news came that we were ordered home, coupled with another piece of intelligence, the birth of Laurence, which arrived almost by the same post. I felt my heart spring to life, as it were, again, at the thoughts of the happiness which dear Gerald led me to think might be in store for me. This child, this precious child, would, I hoped, prove a tie by which the mother's heart should be firmly united to mine; and in the solitude of my own chamber I wept and prayed over the unseen infant, while my thoughts reverted with a fondness which surprised me, to her who had given me this blessing, which was to prove the harbinger of golden years to my life.

"It was a rainy evening in April when the dome of St. Paul's, and the spires and towers

of its neighbour-churches, again greeted my eyes, but as the steamer rapidly bore us onward, along the hazy and murky Thames, the sun peeped brightly out, cheering with its welcome our hearts, too foreboding of approaching gloom. When we landed, Gerald and I deposited our packages at an hotel. I could hardly delay to take some necessary refreshment before I ordered a carriage to the door to convey us to Grosvenor Square, where I had prepared Margaret to expect us. I asked Gerald to accompany me, but he positively refused, and I appreciated the delicacy which caused him to shrink from witnessing my reception, after the insight I had given him into the real state of the case. How strong, how buoyant do we sometimes feel! My spirits rose as I traversed rapidly the flinty streets of the metropolis, and, arrived at my own door, my heart beat so violently that I was obliged to summon resolution to descend the steps of the vehicle, while the

driver stood curiously eyeing me, and at length restored me by his scrutiny to something like self-possession.

"On the threshold of the dining-room my mother-in-law met me. She looked sad, and her eyes bore traces of tears, although her greeting was most affectionate.

"'Oh! Mrs. Trevanion,' I cried, as I glanced round the empty room into which she led me,—'where is she—where is Margaret?'

"'Do not alarm yourself, dear Laurence,' she replied; 'Margaret is up-stairs, safe and well—well, that is, with the exception of one of her violent head-aches, which has confined her since the afternoon to her bed.'

"The words cast a cold chill upon my spirits—there was a pause.

"'May I not go up to her,' I said at length; 'at all events, where is the child?' I continued, as Mrs. Trevanion seemed to hesitate in answer to the first query.

"'Do not be impatient, Laurence, you

shall see both,' she replied, appearing startled at my manner, and together we ascended the stairs. Mrs. Trevanion opened the door of Margaret's room, and left us together, saying she would fetch the infant. Margaret was lying, her dressing-robe wrapped round her, on the bed. She looked exquisitely beautiful; her eyes had something of the wildness which they had worn on the evening of my proposal, but certainly, with that exception, she seemed scarcely suffering from pain, so radiant was her whole appearance. As I advanced, she coloured deeply, and the next moment I had bent down and kissed her cheek, which she seemed almost mechanically to turn towards me. I sat down by her side, and took her hand in mine; she seemed touched, strove hard to appear pleased to see me, so hard, indeed, that the effort was plainly discernible, but the chill of my hopes was tempered by seeing her thus exert herself, and Gerald had begged me not to expect too much at first. You may suppose, however,

Geraldine, it was a relief to both, when Mrs. Trevanion entered, and I had the delight of holding my little Laurence for the first time in my arms. He was at this time rather more than three months old, and I could already detect strong resemblance to my wife. After a few moments, Margaret called her mother to her side, and said a few words in a low tone. That lady, after a short pause, advanced to me, whispering that her daughter wanted repose, and that she was a little agitated by my arrival. I again received a cold embrace from my wife, and quitted her apartment.

"Mrs. Trevanion, who was, I think, truly attached to me, delighted me with the interest and care she bestowed on the child; she dispelled, indeed, some of my day-dreams, by the unwilling information, in answer to my earnest inquiries as to Margaret's devotion to her child, that her daughter had never cared for children, and she feared it might be some little time before she would become as much

attached to her babe as either she or I could desire. I concealed my disappointment, however, and the conversation grew more general; so passed my first evening at home, the period to which I had looked forward with so much anxiety and hope!

"I had made Gerald promise that he would come and dine with me the next day, and I sat expecting him till past the time of our appointment, when a note came, written early in the day, saying that he was obliged to leave town, and feared that he could not keep his engagement. I had been talking with Mrs. Trevanion over the child's christening, and had determined, with Margaret's consent, that it should take place at once, Gerald acting as one of the sponsors. I therefore hastened off to his hotel immediately, in hopes of catching him, and finding from his servant, whom I met in the bar, that his master had not yet started, I determined to detain my wife's carriage, which had brought me, and prevail upon him to stop for

a moment on his way and see the child, whose tiny features I felt all a father's desire to exhibit to my friend. I found extraordinary difficulty in persuading Gerald to do this, but at last I succeeded, and even wrung from him an unwilling consent to defer his journey until the following morning, letting his dinner engagement stand. We stayed together, therefore, till towards the time for this last, and then proceeded to Grosvenor Square.

"Margaret, I found, was still an invalid, and Mrs. Trevanion presided at the dinner-table. Gerald, so far from being disappointed at her absence, appeared to feel a strange relief when he heard the state of the case. His manner, which had been confused and absent, visibly changed for the better, and during dinner it was settled that the christening should take place forthwith. I left him with Mrs. Trevanion chatting over their wine, he dandling his future godchild, to pay a visit to my uncle the General, whose house was situated only a street or two distant, and

who was, with Mrs. Trevanion, to supply the proper complement of sponsors. Had I known the thoughts which were distracting the unhappy Margaret during the interval since Gerald had been my guest, I should have trembled. Unobserved, she had seen him enter the house, and now, her door secured, was giving way to a wild torrent of mingled love and anguish, till, determined to see him at all risks, she hastily rang the bell for her maid, and refusing entrance to her mother, who knocked for admission a few moments after, but, thinking her asleep, withdrew, she descended to the drawing-room. Alas! Geraldine, my good genius and hers had forsaken her in that hour! Mrs. Trevanion, who always superintended the toilette of her grandson before going to bed, was in the nursery at the top of the house; and on Margaret entering the drawing-room, where she intended to await my own and Gerald's coming from the dining-room, she found there, standing lost in thought before her

own portrait, which hung over the piano, Gerald—alone!

"Who shall say the wild revulsion of feeling which crossed her breast as my unhappy wife beheld her former lover, him who alone had possessed her heart for more than two years of weary anguish, and whom she had resigned, actuated by a jealousy which had never for one instant superseded her adoration, now gazing upon the representation of herself with an air which told too plainly that the love which had once been hers, was, so far from being another's, as she had thought and feared, ever hers, and hers only! Oh! Gerald, how deep, how noble was your affection for your friend, how severely was it tested when the next moment the object of your early and deep love, uttering a wild cry of agitation, flung herself at your feet, and swore with fatal vehemence never to rise again till you had blessed her ears with the assurance that she was beloved still!

"Overwhelmed by her entreaties and me-

naces, who can blame Gerald, if—to satisfy the wild eagerness of his suppliant, so totally regardless of everything in the pursuit of the phantom of their mutual passion, sacrificed to her pride so long ago—he quieted her with the truth, and repudiated the engagement with Helen Northcote, which Margaret frantically implored him to deny? But the next moment, when, transported with the intelligence, she had risen to her feet, and stood gazing on him with undisguised devotion, his heart smote him for even this tacit encouragement of her conduct; and while she stood transfixed with emotion, tenderly yet vehemently he poured forth the history of my blighted hopes, and implored her to think who and what he was, whom her thoughts and behaviour were thus so bitterly wronging. Friendship had conquered even the weakness of the pleasure he reproached himself for feeling, in once again looking upon this fair but erring being, so madly blinded to all but him; and like some guiding saint, his whole

soul was infused into the fervour with which he urged her acceptance of his advice as to myself, and besought her no further to prolong the agitating and melancholy interview. His entreaties were useless. At one moment recapitulating, with the fury of a maniac, all she had endured in consequence of his rejection of her; at another, melting into tears of tenderness, which were far harder to bear unmoved, she almost forced Gerald to rush in agony from the house, when assuming some degree of calmness, she thus arrested him:—

"'Stay—stay one moment, Gerald!' she said, her voice thrilling his very soul,—'stay, only while I tell you what I shall do. Pity me—scorn me if you will, but do not ask me to spend my life with this man whom I hate! I will not do it! Gerald, yours my heart is, and ever will be. We are nothing to each other, we never can be. Just now, when I wrung the unwilling confession that your love had not swerved from me, even when I thought most it did, in that moment I swore

no longer to sin away my soul, in a vain assumption of affection where no affection existed. It is useless to disguise the truth, Gerald, I am in soul your wife, and I will not be even nominally his. In some retreat, where I may live unseen and unreproved, I shall devote my whole soul to your image, so futilely attempted to be replaced by another. This is the last time we shall ever meet, Gerald,'—and here her voice strove vainly with the tears which choked it—'but you, too, will give me your assurance—will you not?—that you will never give to another my place in your heart, that place which I so madly perilled in my hour of pride.'

"While these words were being uttered I had returned, and starting at the sound of my loud summons at the hall-door, Margaret, springing forward, threw her arms for one moment round the neck of Gerald, and the next had fled to her own chamber, where a short time after, Mrs. Trevanion found her extended on the bed, in a swoon. The agita-

tion of Gerald's manner confounded me, but whilst I was trying to fathom it, a message was brought from Mrs. Trevanion, which alarmed me for Margaret, who was lying in strong delirium in her room. Gerald went away, and, confused with the combination of events, I ascended to the room of my wife, and there, watching by her side during the long hours of night, Mrs. Trevanion and I heard enough from the pale lips of the sufferer to remove the veil from my eyes, and account for all the past mystery, which now appeared so easy of unravelment.

"Gradually, and after a day or two of complete stupor, Margaret recovered. I knew when she would do so, and left her, that she might not awake to consciousness and find me present. The first use she made of her recovery, was to write to me a long letter declaring the affection she had ever entertained for Gerald, and her total inability to eradicate it from her heart. It seemed that she and Gerald had been all but engaged,

when, in consequence of a slight quarrel, in which the latter's pride justly refused to bend to that of his haughty love, and from a feeling of jealousy relative to Helen, whose affection for her cousin was easily read, Margaret had, on the morning of my arrival, set forth in no very enviable mood to walk in the park, where I had found her, and where the accident took place to her uncle. In conversation with me, the idea had occurred to her of teasing Gerald for his impracticability, by flirting violently with one who appeared a fit subject for carrying out her views, and also calculated, in being Gerald's friend, to render the wound deeper. She went farther than she intended, and succeeded in alienating him entirely, for although still loving her, Gerald had been too disgusted by her conduct, to dream of ever making her his wife. I had come upon her in the conservatory after the concluding interview had taken place, in which, after mutual reproaches, her spirit had been too much wrung, to admit of

anything like reconciliation. She had accused him of being in love with Helen, and used expressions in reference to her, which Gerald would not stay to hear repeated. Thus they had parted, whilst at the fatal moment I had been led to witness her agonies, and to give her the means of revenging herself, as she believed she still might, upon Gerald, by marriage with his rival. All this was told in her letter, which exonerated Gerald from all degree of blame during the unpremeditated interview, which had, in assuring her of his freedom from engagement with Helen, decided her upon separating entirely from me."

END OF VOL. I.

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